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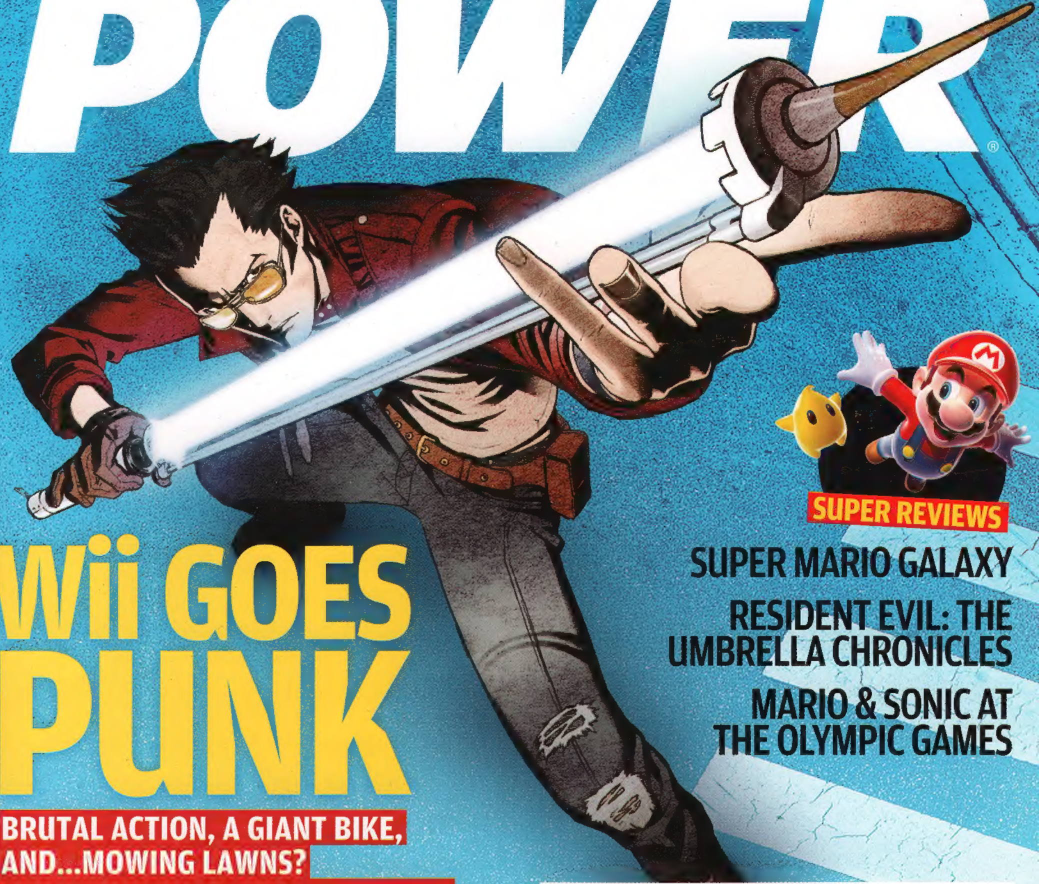

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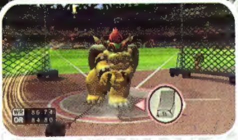
100m
TEAM MARIO
Fencing
TEAM MARIO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1416 2nd
1211 3rd
1866 1st

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COM 8
2:34

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IN STORES NOVEMBER 20
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Aquatics
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Hammer Throw
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CONTENTS HOLIDAY 2007

FEATURES

38 Wii Goes Punk
Beam Katanas? Wrestling masks? Collecting coconuts? Trust us, you've never played a game quite like No More Heroes.

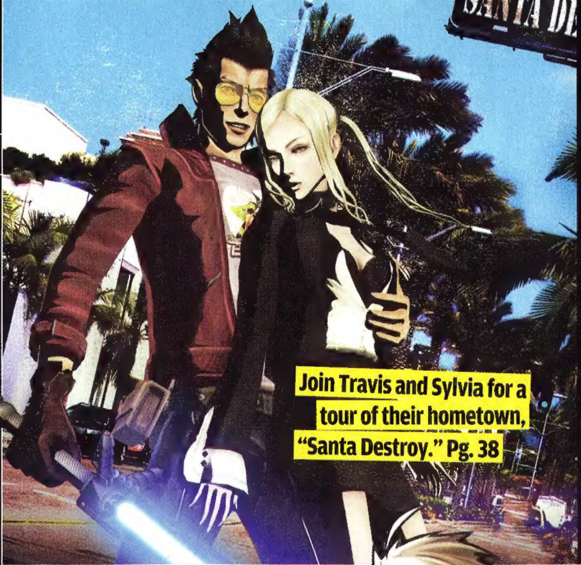
46 Tempting Fate
Explore the amazing world of Square Enix's newest epic RPG for DS, Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates.

50 Funky Monkey
Sega's beloved maraca-shaking music series has finally returned on Wii, and we've played it first.

54 The Path to Ruin
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin takes combat strategy to a whole new level, and the storied series will never be the same.

60 Sega, Love
Sonic and a long list of other Sega favorites have assembeled for the next big sports game on both Wii and DS.

64 Holiday Buyers' Guide
We make shopping easier (whether the gifts are for you or someone else) with our top Wii and DS Holiday picks.



Join Travis and Sylvia for a tour of their hometown, "Santa Destroy." Pg. 38

38
Think you've seen and played it all? No More Heroes would like to say "hi."

54
Who says you can't look stylish while fighting for humanity's survival?

So this is what life is like out of the buble...

50
Grab your maracas and shake your way on over to our exclusive Samba de Amigo feature.

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates Pg. 46

FAST...
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This month's reviews are out of this world.

NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS

30

WE BRAWL IN SMASH; TEST-DRIVE THE LATEST KARTS; SONIC GOES ZERO G; HARVEY BIRDMAN'S ON THE CASE; FINAL FANTASY IV IS REBORN; DS GOES TO BOMBERMAN LAND; LUFFY EATS DEVIL FRUIT; WORMS IN SPACE; AND MORE

DEPARTMENTS

10 **Pulse**
In this month's Pulse, we talk about a lot of cool things that have nothing whatsoever to do with the delayed release date of Super Smash Bros. Brawl.

16 **News**

24 **Wii Channels**
Big WiiWare announcements, new Wii Channels, and cool classics on Virtual Console—this section is on overdrive this month.

30 **Previews**

68 **Sweepstakes**

70 **Power Profile**
Goichi Suda, the creative force behind this month's cover game, No More Heroes, gives us a must-read interview.

74 **Playback**
We remember Fabio's favorite NES game, Ironsword: Wizards & Warriors II.

77 **Reviews**

92 **Community**

96 **Next Month**

78
The review is in—is Super Mario Galaxy amazing, or AMAZING?

70
Goichi Suda gives the best answer ever in this month's Power Profiles.

31
We played the new Wii Mario Kart—really!

Ha! You call *that* a scary face, Zombie? Stare into *these* eyes!

Sonic's in several big games this month, but none bigger than brawl. Pg. 30

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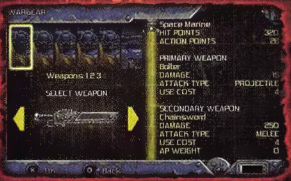


WARGEAR

Weapons 1 2 3

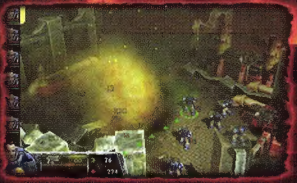
SELECT WEAPON

Space Marine
HIT POINTS 320
ACTION POINTS 26

PRIMARY WEAPON
Bolter
DAMAGE 15
ATTACK TYPE PROJECTILE
USE COST 4

SECONDARY WEAPON
Chainsword
DAMAGE 250
ATTACK TYPE MELEE
USE COST 4
AP WEIGHT 0

OVER 20 RANGED & CLOSE COMBAT WEAPONS



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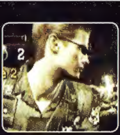
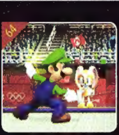
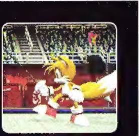
GAME INDEX

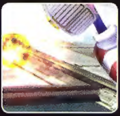
GAME TITLE	PAGE
Ace Attorney: Apollo Justice (DS)	17
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin (DS)	54
Art of Fighting (VC)	26
Bleach: The Blade of Fate (DS)	66
Bomberman Land Touch! 2 (DS)	36
Brain Age 2: More Training in Minutes a Day (DS)	66
Castlevania II: Simon's Quest (VC)	28
Contra 4 (DS)	66
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends (DS)	82
Cooking Mama: Cook Off (Wii)	65
Dementium: The Ward (DS)	84
Disaster: Day of Crisis (Wii)	16
Dr. Mario's Virus Buster (Wii)	25
Fatal Fury (VC)	26
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates (DS)	46
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Young King and the Promised Land (Wii)	24
Final Fantasy IV (DS)	32
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings (DS)	84
Fire Emblem (DS)	16
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn (Wii)	64
Gate of Thunder (VC)	26
Geometry Wars: Galaxies (Wii)	65
Ghost Squad (Wii)	82
Godzilla Unleashed (Wii)	82
Golden Axe III (VC)	28
Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock (Wii)	65
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law (Wii)	34
Hotel Dusk: Room 215 (DS)	67
Ironsword: Wizards & Warriors II (NES)	74
Kirby (DS)	16
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass (DS)	67
Link's Crossbow Training (Wii)	84
Luminous Arc (DS)	67
Lunar Knights (DS)	67
Lunar Pool (VC)	28
Madden NFL 08 (Wii)	65
Magician Lord (VC)	26
Manhunt 2 (Wii)	80
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games (Wii)	64, 79
Mario Kart for Wii (Wii)	31
Mario Party DS (DS)	79
Mario Strikers Charged (Wii)	65
Maru Bou Shikaku (Wii)	25
Medal of Honor Heroes 2 (Wii)	86
Metal Marines (VC)	28
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption (Wii)	65
Minna de Puzzloop (Wii)	25
Mojipittan (Wii)	25
Monster Hunter 3 (Wii)	16
MX vs. ATV Untamed (Wii)	32
Need for Speed ProStreet (Wii)	85
Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos (VC)	28
Ninja JaJaMaru-Kun (VC)	28
No More Heroes (Wii)	38
Obscure: The Aftermath (Wii)	18
Okami (Wii)	18
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure (Wii)	36
Ontamarama (DS)	86
Orcs & Elves (DS)	82
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations (DS)	67
Picross DS (DS)	66
Planet Puzzle League (DS)	66
Pokémon Diamond & Pearl (DS)	67
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2 (Wii)	80
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles (Wii)	65, 80
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle (DS)	18
Samba de Amigo (Wii)	50
Samurai-Ghost (VC)	28
Sega Superstar Tennis (Wii, DS)	60
Sonic and the Secret Rings (Wii)	64
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity (Wii)	33
Sonic Rush Adventure (DS)	66
Soulcalibur Legends (Wii)	86
Star Soldier R (Wii)	25
Super Dodgeball Brawlers (DS)	19
Super Mario Galaxy (Wii)	64, 78
Super Mario Stadium Baseball (Wii)	16
Super Paper Mario (Wii)	64
Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii)	30
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys (DS)	17
The Simpsons Game (Wii)	85
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08 (Wii)	65
Tomb Raider Anniversary (Wii)	82
Trauma Center: New Blood (Wii)	86
WarioWare: Smooth Moves (Wii)	65
Wii Music (Wii)	16
World Heroes (VC)	28
Worms: A Space Oddity (Wii)	34
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure (Wii)	64

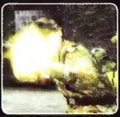
DS = Nintendo DS
NES = Nintendo Entertainment System
VC = Virtual Console
Wii = Wii

65
Wesker
100
Samurai Edge 2


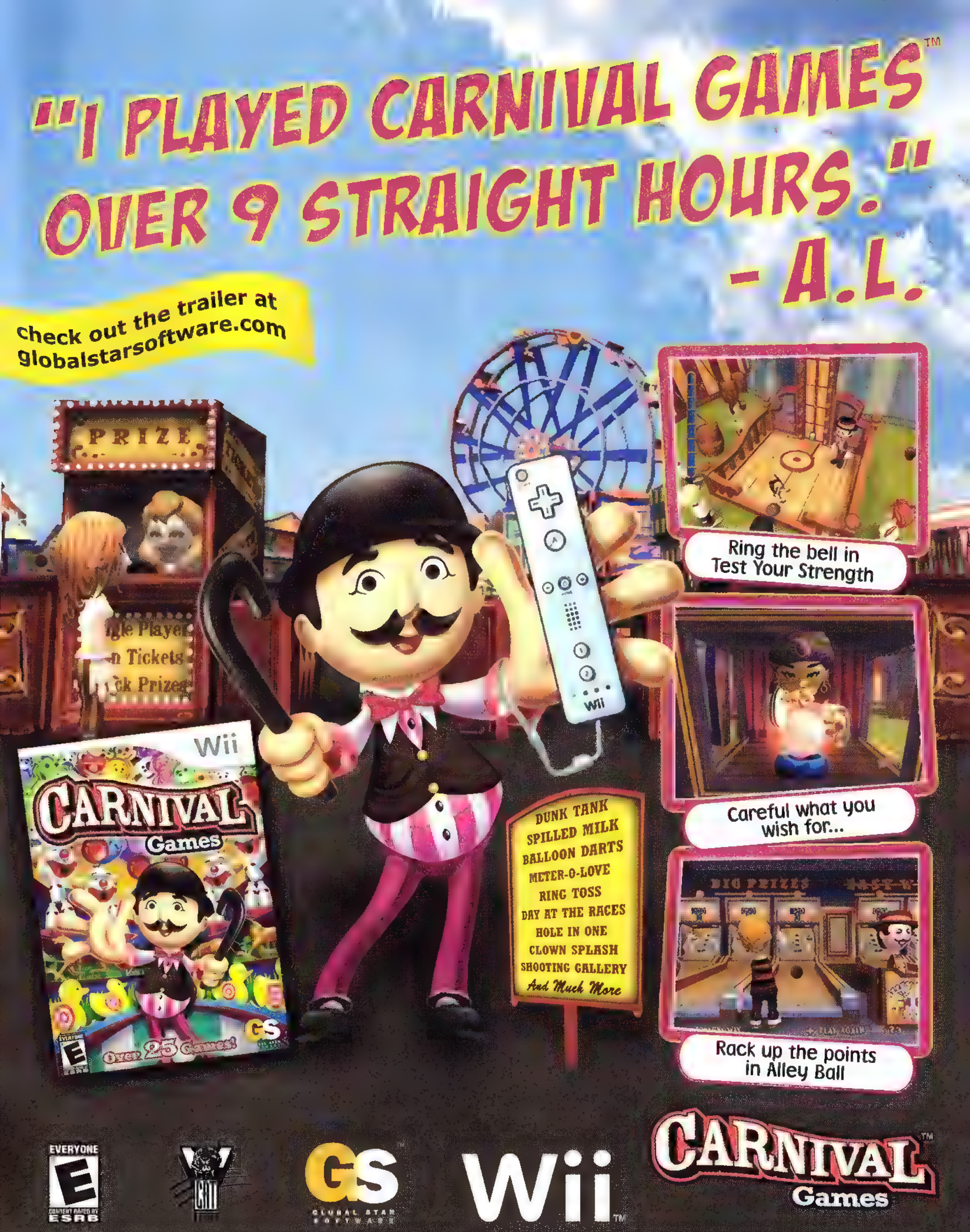








86
Once you draw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Pulse

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Welcome to the first-ever Nintendo Power Holiday Special! Sandwiched between our December and January issues, this book is loaded with the biggest year-end games, like Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings, Manhunt 2, Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, Mario Party DS, and—finally—the long-awaited masterpiece, Super Mario Galaxy. It's absolutely amazing! If you're a big Mario fan like I am, then you're headed for a *very* happy holiday.

In addition to the long list of classic game characters you'll find inside this issue, I'm sure that you noticed a brand-new hero gracing our cover. His name is Travis Touchdown, his game is No More Heroes, and it's set to blow you away early next year. I've played through the whole game, and I'm convinced that Wii has its next new superstar. No More Heroes is incredibly unique, the action is intense, and the story and characters are waaay out there. Definitely check it out.

We've also got exclusive looks and hands-on impressions of games like Samba de Amigo, Sega Superstars Tennis, Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates, and Advance Wars: Days of Ruin. And check out our Holiday Buyer's Guide for the very best that the Wii and DS have to offer during this shopping season.

So, toss a log in the fireplace, power up the Wii, and get ready for one of the best game lineups that Nintendo fans have seen in years.

Chris Slate
Editor-In-Chief

LETTERS

Hi everybody, Chris Slate here. Since this is only my second issue as Editor-In-Chief, I thought, "what better way to get to know Nintendo Power readers than to answer every letter in Pulse?" So, here we go!

NICE TA MEET'CHA

I'm a longtime subscriber, and I just want to thank Chris Slate for keeping the magazine the way that it has been. I'm also glad to still see a lot of familiar faces! Keep up the great work, guys!

Tori D.

I am a longtime (seriously—since 1990 or so) Nintendo Power subscriber, and I must admit that I was worried about how the magazine would turn out under its new management. Well, I have just received and blitzed through the first Future US issue (#222), and it's everything that I'd hoped it would be. Thanks so much for keeping the same look & feel, yet providing the new and fresh content we've come to expect. From what I see, Nintendo Power is in great hands! Keep up the good work.

Gord R.

Hey, thanks for the kind words, Tori and Gord! We've been pulling all-nighters here at the new Nintendo Power offices to make sure that the magazine lives up to readers' expectations, so we're all tickled pink that you think our work has paid off. Hopefully the next issue will be even better, so please look forward to it!

SMASH DELAY

In volume 222 (on page 46, paragraph 2, words 2 through 13) you said that Super Smash Bros. Brawl was "finally hitting" in a month (it was October 29 when I got the magazine). That is incorrect because it had been revealed earlier that month that it was coming out Feb. 10th, 2008.

Turbo26

Ah, right. What happened is that the new release date and the fact that Sonic is in the game—were announced just days after we went to press with our story As you can imagine, we were not thrilled. It was just bad timing—problems like this pop up sometimes due to the long lead times in magazine publishing. For the record, the game is now officially set to release on February 10, 2008. Sorry for any confusion!

I'm a Super Smash Bros. Dojo regular, and Chris Slate, I'm sorry but you are wrong on something. You said on page 47 that Brawl is coming out on December 3rd, but you are WRONG! It comes out on Feburary 10th! I bet that Scott P. wouldn't have made that mistake!

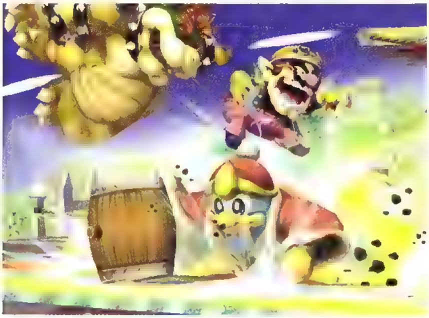
Cameron Z.

Well, hey—there's no need to be a meanie about it. And it's no fair, comparing me to Scott Pelland—that guy knows everything! He's got a black-belt in Nintendo! He could pull your heart out, show it to you, and race through Super Mario Bros. before you died!

In Vol. 222 you said that Super Smash Bros. Brawl was set to be released on December 3rd, but on October 12th, they announced that the release date has been moved to February 10th, 2008. You should really check before you send out the new issues.

Mackenzie B.

You know, we really got an awful lot of emails about this. We load up the Smash Bros. Dojo every morning too, you know—we just don't have access



Kudos to everyone who wasn't fooled by our little test. See, we threw out a fake Smash Bros. release date to see which of you would notice And, judging by your emails, it was...all of you! Nice work!

to a time machine. Well, not since Chris Shepperd broke our last one while trying to bring dinosaurs to our 2999 office party on Space Station Nintendo Power

TIME TO GET AN SD CARD

I was just checking up on the Smash Bros. Dojo—

Uh-oh, here we go...

—when I stumbled upon an entry talking about the new Stage Creator. It's really awesome.

Oh! Um, yeah, I agree! I can't wait to make my own Smash stages. I'll make really dumb ones just to annoy Hoffman and Thomason.

Anyway, I kept reading until I saw a comment about how glad Masahiro Sakurai [the game's director] is that the Wii is SD compatible. Was he joking around like he often does, or is he saying that you can only save your stages if you have an SD card in the Wii?

Adam M.

I read Sakurai's comments to mean that the SD cards will provide potentially limitless storage space for as many levels as you'd like to create. While he hasn't clarified whether or not it will be possible to save some stages inside the Wii itself, I would guess that you can, but we'll have to wait and see.

THE BOSS OF Mii

Is there any sort of world record for the largest Mii parade? My friend CaliforniaHurBoy has over 4500 Miis in his. (Look him up, he posted a video of it.) Is his the biggest?

Redjarman

4500? I don't roll with any less than a cool mil in my Mii posse.
And before you ask, yes, I'm full of it.

MISSING Miis

Whenever I get my newest volume of NP, I'm always excited to see what new Miis people have come up with at the end of each volume. Well, when I got vol. 222 in the mail, I was disappointed to find that the Mii of the Month section was missing. Where are the Miis?

Nick B.

They're all in Redjarman's friend's parade. Seriously though, we want to run lots of cool Mii pictures too, but you guys just haven't sent us any lately! Let this be a lesson—you can't just sit by and wait for other people to send photos of their Miis, you've got to join it, too! Snap that photo and send it to us at mii@futureus.com. Make 'em good ones, folks!

CAN'T GET ENOUGH

Even though I have beaten Paper Mario and Paper Mario 2 many times, I find myself wanting to play these games again from start to finish! How about you guys? Do you have any certain game or series that you like to play over and over?

Khader

Of all my favorites, I've probably played through Super Mario World and the original NES Castlevania the most. Great gameplay truly is timeless.

MARIO THE SAILOR MAN?

A while back, one of my friends said that if it wasn't for Popeye the Sailor Man, Mario wouldn't exist. Do you know if this story true?

Kevin C.

I think I can help you out here, Kevin. According to an interview that Mario's creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, once gave, he was once supposed to work on a Popeye game, but it fell through. However, thinking about the rivalry between Popeye, Bluto, and Olive Oil helped inspire him to create Mario, Donkey Kong, and Pauline in the original Donkey Kong arcade game. So, Kevin, say "thank you" to Popeye and eat your spinach.

OH, SNAP

What are your thoughts on a new Pokémon Snap for the Wii? I mean, come on! Four familiar continents and almost 500 Pokémon with point-and-snap Wii remote action. My friend Dan mentioned the idea to me, and I thought: "What could go wrong?" Are we the first, or have you fantasized about some sort of Snap revolution, too? Maybe you've even caught wind of something in the works?

The K-Storm

K-Storm, would you by any chance be a radio station that plays the best and most adult contemporary music? I can't say that I've ever "fantasized" about a new Pokémon Snap, but you can consider me on board with your idea. I loved the original N64 game, and—held sideways—the Wii remote would make a pretty neat camera. Now, how's about you fire me up some Kenny G to help me catch up on my Zs, hmmm?

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

I wrote in last month and I was published in the Pulse section! How cool is that? Unfortunately, my name is Evn, not "Eva." Don't worry though, I get that a lot. Well, more often I get "Evan," but Eva isn't rare. It was once mistaken as "Erin" and I got put in the girl's cabin. Well, I just thought I would let you know. Keep publishing a wonderful magazine! (And I'm excited to find out what Future US will bring us :)

Evn

Sorry for the mispelling, Evn—I wholeheartedly approve of your dismissal of those annoying little vowels. Nothing but consonants—that's a real man's name. In fact, maybe I'll follow your lead—Chrs has a nice ring to it, don't you think? With five guys named Chris contributing to the magazine this month, I've been looking for a way to differentiate myself.

ROBO NO-NO

An owner of a Wii Console is asking permission to register you as a Wii Friend to exchange e-mail with you. This individual's Wii e-mail address is [censored]@wii.com.

Someone's lonely Wii

A quick reminder: our fully-computerized letter-gathering robot, Pulsotron 3000, isn't allowed to have any friends. (Buddy up with robots too much and then they take over.) Do your part to stop the Terminator apocalypse by not sending Pulsotron your friend codes.

WE WOULD LIKE TO DREAM

I'm having really wierd dreams. I had a dream that the two Japanese guys in the Wii commericals came to my house and showed me Super Mario Galaxy and Super Smash Bros Brawl. Am I going crazy, or is it happening to you guys too?

Jdirector

Hey, I've had that dream! Did you wake up with a weird chip implanted in the back of your neck, too?

'TIS THE SEASON FOR ADS

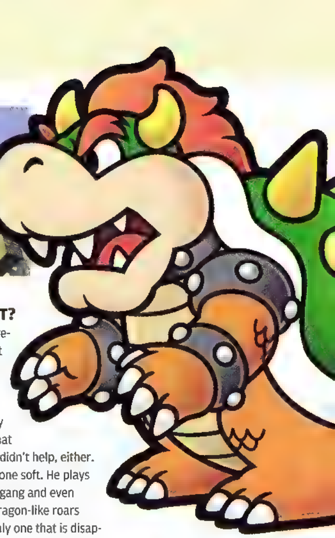
The new Nintendo Power has way too many ads. I am otherwise glad about the change-over. Nintendo Power seems intact and just the way I like it, but the ads are really overwhelming. On a good note, I'm glad to see your enthusiasm and dedication to making Nintendo Power "the absolute best it can be." Good luck!

Brian E.

Love or hate the ads, their number should go down significantly over the next couple of issues as we move away from the busy holiday selling season. We saw a huge upswing in ad pages last month because more games than ever are being released right now for the red-hot Wii and DS. However, new titles will slow down midway through December, and the ads will follow suit.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

After making sooo many new friends,



HAS BOWSER GONE SOFT?

Bowser has lost his scary edge. I remember way back when I was just a small fry playing through Super Mario 64. In that game, Bowser was the scariest beast I had ever seen, causing me to nearly soil my shorts. The creepy organ music that played during the final boss fight didn't help, either. But, now Bowser seems to have gone soft. He plays in sporting events with the Mario gang and even had his voice changed from the dragon-like roars to a fatherly grunting. Am I the only one that is disappointed with Bowser's new personality? —**ANTHONY L.**

"Fatherly grunting?" Is your dad a koopa king, by any chance? Bowser has softened up (see his cuddly Paper Mario-self on the right), but he's toughening up his "Giga Bowser" mode for the new Smash Bros. Just look at him go up there!

EVERYTHING WILL BE JUST FINE

I got an email saying that the change in publishers won't mean much to us readers, but honestly, I couldn't care less about us. What I want to know is, what happens to all of *you* guys? All of you have given this magazine a soul. If you guys go, that *does* affects me. I'd be losing the magazine I'd subscribed to for longer than I can remember. Losing all of your monthly voices would feel like it did when I heard that Steve Irwin had died—shocking, saddening, and a little disorienting.

Reading over what I just wrote, I realize that it is perhaps a touch creepy, but it's simply a matter of how I'd feel if this magazine, which contributes so much to a big part of my life (gaming), is suddenly placed in the hands of…some other people. It ain't Nintendo Power without you cats.

Neokimchi

No need to worry, Neokimchi. Top staffers Steve Thomason and Chris Hoffman are still with the magazine, other former writers still contribute, and we new guys are the book's biggest fans. We won't let you down!

having discussions about games, asking and answering questions, and helping one another out, it is such a shame that Nintendo closed its forums. Why did they have to close so suddenly? Please bring back the forums. I really miss them. (I'm sure I'm not the only one.)

Skitty18

(My former NSider name)

Now that NP is owned by Future US, are you guys going to stop making the Most Wanted section in Pulse? And what about the NP Survey? Are those two sections permanently gone, or were they just not in the December 2007 issue? I'm not trying to chew you out, or anything.

The Kid

Call off the dogs, man! Geez! Just don't hit me in the face, alright? Anywhere but my beautiful face! We really didn't want to lose those sections, but they have always depended on input from the people at nintendo.com's NSider forums. Since Nintendo has closed its forums indefinitely, there isn't much we can do right at this moment. I would personally love to help put some forums back out there for Nintendo fans to go to, so you never know, maybe we can help make something happen in the future. For now though, we'll be looking at ways to bring those cut sections back as soon as possible, so just hang in there. Hey—HEY! I said not in the face!

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Chris Slate? Game Players' Chris Slate, in my NP Magazine? This is some amazing stuff. I won't hold my breath, but it would be great if being in that position gives you the power to turn NP into the same awesomely insane (and entertaining) magazine that GP was. It's good to see a familiar face, even if that face is just a picture in a magazine.

Crybrush Weepwood, Whiny Pirate

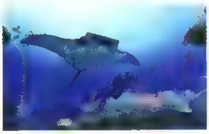
Wow, a real pirate! It's true, 'tis I who once steered the good ship Game Players. But to this old sea log, Nintendo Power is already awesome and entertaining. Now, let's sing some old sea shanties and toast the good old days!

YOU'VE GOT US ALL WRONG

I certainly hope that you guys are not trying to fish (no pun intended) for Steve Irwin jokes in regards to the December Screen Test picture. If you placed this picture in this magazine with the sole intent of revering the game that it comes from, then fine, so be it. However, if this is meant to be in any way a reference to the unfortunate death of Steve Irwin, I am strongly disappointed. I am writing you this email with the sole intent to make sure that this was not considered, on your part, as a way to open the door for comments in relation to Steve Irwin's untimely death.

PrimalDynaoX38

What? No! Geez, how'd you get that idea? We just grabbed any old screen from the upcoming Wii game Endless Ocean since that game has a different kind of setting that could inspire some fresh jokes. No evil conspiracy at all.



BRAIN BENDER

My little brother is a huge fan of your magazine, and I'm afraid that you've rubbed off too much on him. The other day he had to write a problem for an equation in his math class. Here's what he wrote: Mr. T had some money. Chuck Norris gave him 5 bucks and told him to get a Pepsi. He didn't. Then Mr.T had $13. How much money did he have before? You see what I mean?

PS: He had $8 before if you haven't figured it out yet...

Angela F.

Wow, my Brain Age score must be even lower than I'd suspected. Does your brother possibly draw envelope art, or tattoo Zelda characters on his arm? Math really isn't my best subject...

GETTING PAID

First up, how do the people at Nintendo Power get paid? Is it based on how good you are at Smash Bros? That would be the most logical way to decide, but I suppose it could also be determined by who beats on Chris Shepherd the most.

[no name given]

Well, you do get a nickel for every time that you kick Chris Shepperd, but only Chris Hoffman has shown the tenacity to make any real money this way. The rest of us have to make our money the old-fashioned way—playing and writing about Nintendo games.

BACONATOR BRAINWASH

For some reason—I'm not blaming anything (cough) on Wendy's Baconator sandwich (cough)—I counted up all of my console games and sorted out my favorites. The results? Nintendo: 15 games; Sony: 8 games; Microsoft: 4 games. Nintendo is doing pretty well with making good and fun games, and Wendy's should change their menu.

Dan F.

I really wish you'd told me more about this sandwich that has the power to control men's minds.

FROM DS TO DREAMLAND

My parents are convinced that the DS is keeping me awake at night when I'm supposed to be going to sleep. I've found that it is more like a book, to lull me to sleep instead of keeping me awake. They want proof, so I'm turning to you guys. Can you help me out?

Roger H.

You're right, of course. That's what the "sleep" function is for.

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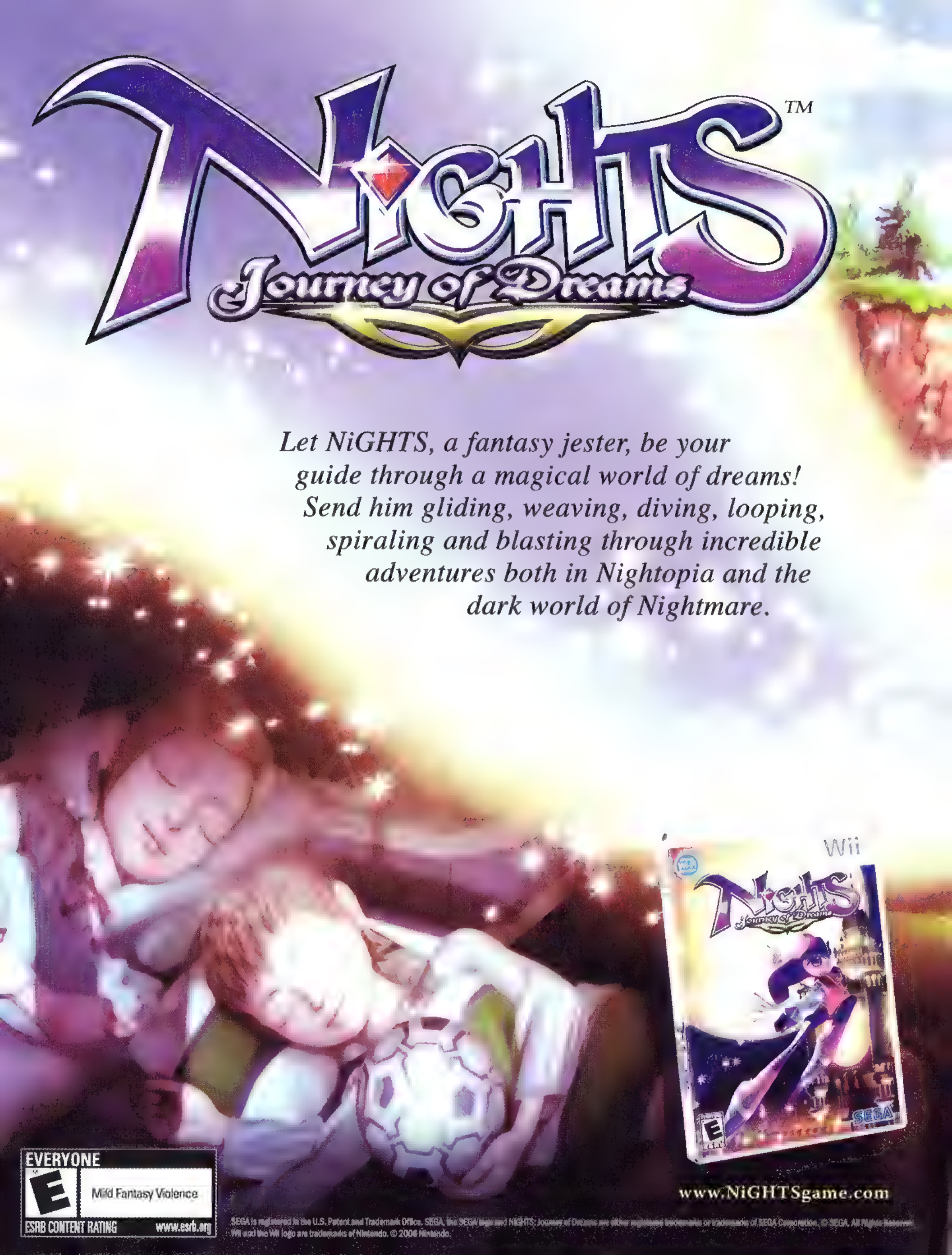

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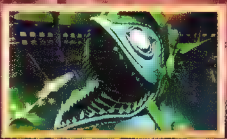
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Wii

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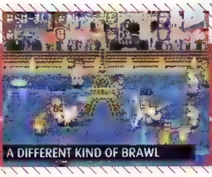
COLLEGE GETS SCARY

CAPCOM'S SECOND COMING

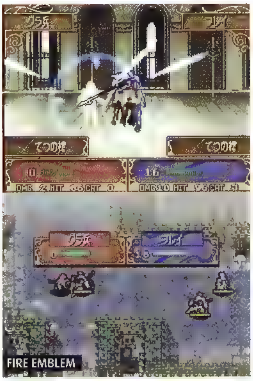

A DIFFERENT KIND OF BRAWL

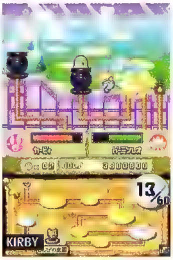
MORE MEGATONS!

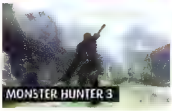
Next Wave

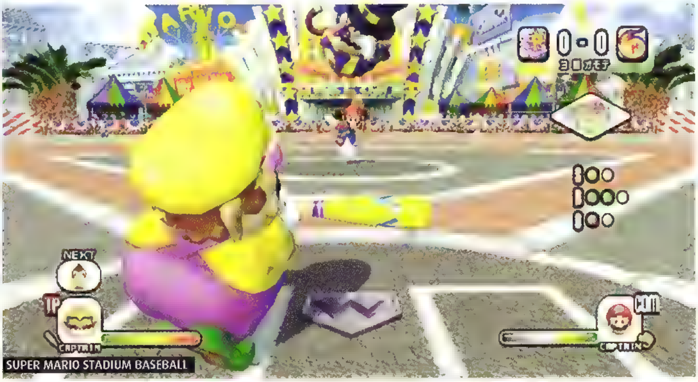
Let the good times roll. Nintendo announces yet another batch of major new Wii and DS titles in Japan.

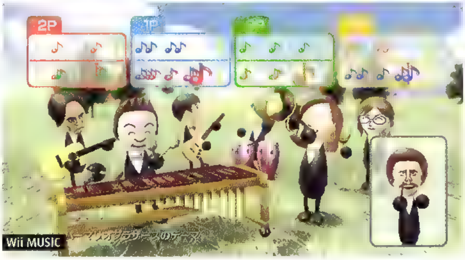
At a recent press conference in Japan, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata surprised the assembled media by unveiling a slew of previously unannounced games. For Wii, the executive revealed Super Mario Stadium Baseball, which is being developed by Namco Bandai like its GameCube predecessor, and Monster Hunter 3, courtesy of Capcom. The latter coming exclusively to Wii is especially big news in Japan, where Monster Hunter has been one of the best-selling franchises in recent years. A pair of Wii titles that had seemingly gone into hiding—Disaster: Day of Crisis and Wii Music -also re-emerged. For DS, the latest installments in the Fire Emblem and Kirby franchises were shown for the first time, as was an all-new RPG called Soma Bringer from the makers of Baten Kaitos and Xenosaga. Details remain scant and none of the titles have been announced for North America, so for now these early screenshots will have to suffice. —Steve T.


FIRE EMBLEM


KIRBY


MONSTER HUNTER 3


SUPER MARIO STADIUM BASEBALL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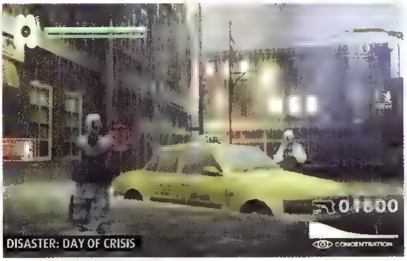
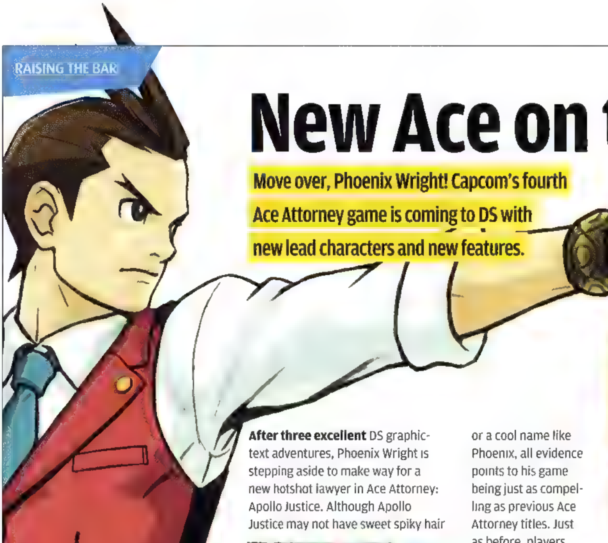

DISASTER: DAY OF CRISIS

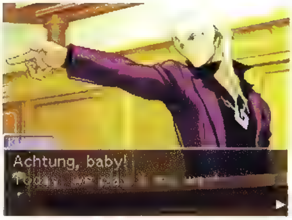
RAISING THE BAR

New Ace on the Case

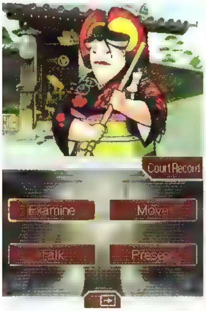
Move over, Phoenix Wright! Capcom's fourth Ace Attorney game is coming to DS with new lead characters and new features.



After three excellent DS graphic-text adventures, Phoenix Wright is stepping aside to make way for a new hotshot lawyer in Ace Attorney: Apollo Justice. Although Apollo Justice may not have sweet spiky hair or a cool name like Phoenix, all evidence points to his game being just as compelling as previous Ace Attorney titles. Just as before, players will get to investigate crime scenes, converse with NPCs, cross-examine witnesses, and point out contradictions by yelling into the microphone. As the first Ace Attorney title created completely from the ground up for the DS (the Phoenix Wright titles were GBA ports), the game adds plenty of extra features, like dusting for fingerprints and footprints, using an x-ray machine, and harnessing power from your magician assistant, Trucy, to see through witnesses' lies when they're on the stand. Bizarre cases and quirky characters again factor prominently into the game's story; you'll square off in court against rock star-turned-prosecutor Klavier Gavin, and you'll encounter familiar characters like Ema Skye (from the first Phoenix Wright's bonus chapter), prosecutor Winston Payne, and even Phoenix himself. Apollo will make his debut in February 2008. —**Chris H.**



Achtung, baby!



Court Record
Back

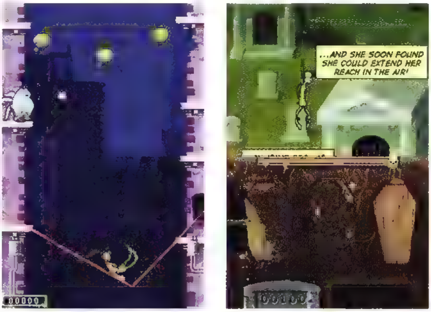
ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Food for Thought

Aliens versus zombies – what more can you ask for?

The zombie renaissance (see 28 Weeks/Months Later, etc.) continues—except this time, the walking dead are the good guys. Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys for the Nintendo DS throws you into a world much like our own (in the 1950s, anyway) that's been overrun by, well, Alien Brain Thingys. The only ones who can repel this cerebral menace? Zombies. Three of 'em, to be precise, each using their individual abilities to get them through the adventure.

Developer InLight Entertainment has taken special care to make the usually horrific zombies likeable protagonists. Says Ken Gratz, Director of Product Development at publisher Ignition USA, "InLight's team has come up with a uniquely humorous and satirical take on comics and retro sci-fi. You throw in a solid platformer and some truly entertaining mini-games, and you have a game that is accessible to all and downright fun to play." —**Justin C.**


...AND SHE SOON FOUND SHE COULD EXTEND HER REACH IN THE AIR!

Zombies defending the Earth from alien invaders? If a more brilliant concept exists, we'd sure love to hear about it.

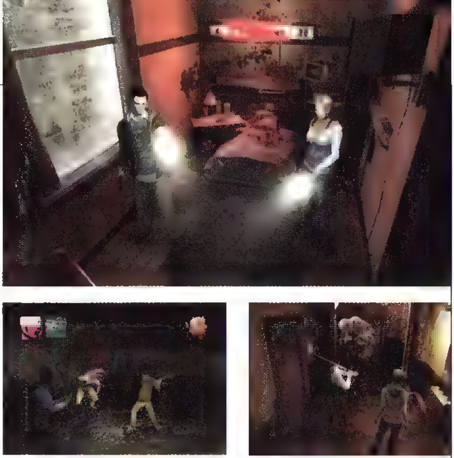
HIGHER LEARNING

Terror Obscura

Graduating beyond the world of high-school survival horror into the college years.

Heavily influenced by shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and movies like *Scream*, the original Obscure presented a different, lighter form of survival horror. Obscure: The Aftermath for Wii takes place two years after the events of that game, when the returning characters are trying to find a sense of normalcy at college.

But it seems that's simply an impossibility as these undergrads find themselves once again fighting for their lives against all manner of monsters. A strange plant is found on campus (no, not *that* kind of plant...), and it leads to all sorts of badness for the game's six playable characters. Luckily, weapons abound and up to two characters at a time can tackle the various hairy situations. If you're playing solo, you'll get an AI-controlled partner, but a second player can jump in at any time. Just remember: survival horror is best when shared. —Justin C.



Don't worry; any university of high repute offers courses in Monster Bludgeoning and Flashlight Proficiency.

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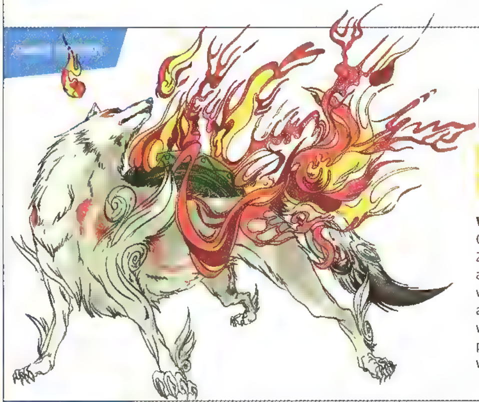


Let the Fur Fly

After months of rumors and speculation, Capcom confirms that Okami is coming to Wii.

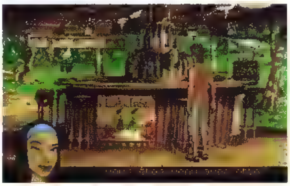
Wii owners will finally get to howl at Okami, Capcom's critically acclaimed 2006 adventure game starring a celestial wolf. The PS2 version wowed gamers with creative characters and breathtaking scenery, as well as a mammoth amount of gameplay. It takes only a few minutes with Okami to see why it belongs on Wii—throughout the game, you can stop time and paint directly on the screen to affect what's going on -a perfect use of the Wii remote. The Wii version comes via the folks at Ready at Dawn, known for their solid work on Daxter for the PSP. Look for Okami to hit shelves next spring. —Chris Sh.

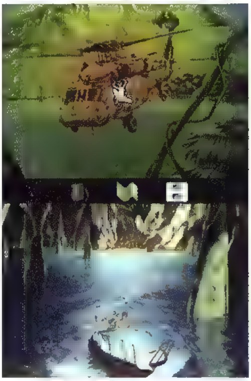
[illegible]

Portable Point-and-Click

Popular PC adventure Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle finds a new home on the DS.

It may not be familiar to US gamers, but the Runaway series has enjoyed huge success throughout Europe. Next year DS owners will have an opportunity to see what all the fuss is about when Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle comes to Nintendo's handheld courtesy of French publisher Focus Home Interactive. A graphic adventure in the vein of PC classics like Broken Sword and Escape from Monkey Island, The Dream of the Turtle places a heavy emphasis on brain-teasing puzzles and comedic storytelling. The point-and-click gameplay should translate nicely to the touch screen, and new video technology has allowed the development team to cram more than an hour of animation sequences onto the DS card. It's nice to see a game like this finally coming to the dual-screened handheld. Hopefully there's more to follow. (We're looking at you, Grim Fandango!) —Steve T.

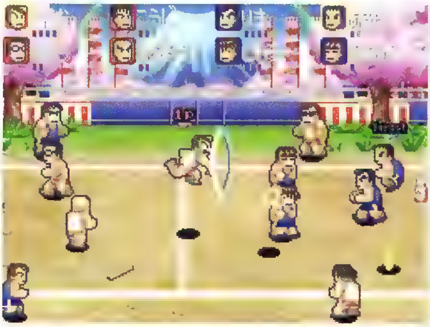




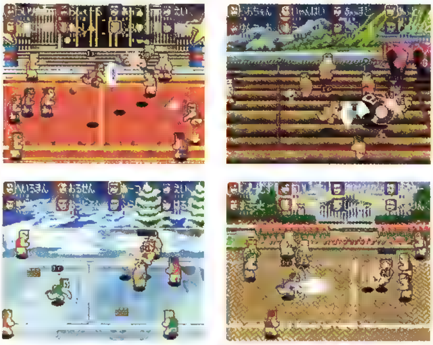
Keep Your Head Up

Super Dodgeball Brawlers brings the classic series to the DS with new moves, modes, and wireless multiplayer.

Aksys Games has announced Super Dodgeball Brawlers, a revival of the playground sports title Super Dodge Ball that originated on the NES. Flaunting over 100 new special attacks, each with its own animation and effect, Brawlers should turn the heads of both veteran and rookie dodgeballers. In addition to the new special moves, Brawlers also adds a new melee system that would surely earn you a detention on the playground—you can now kick, punch, and even use weapons against your opponents. And once you've worked over the other team for enough time, you can unleash a Team Upgrade attack that will either boost one of your players or KO one of your opponents. For off-the-court fun, there's also a create-a-character mode. Aksys hasn't revealed how the dual screens or the touch screen will factor into the gameplay, but they have confirmed eight-way multiplayer action. We'll report on any new details as the game approaches its spring 2008 release date. —Chris Sh.



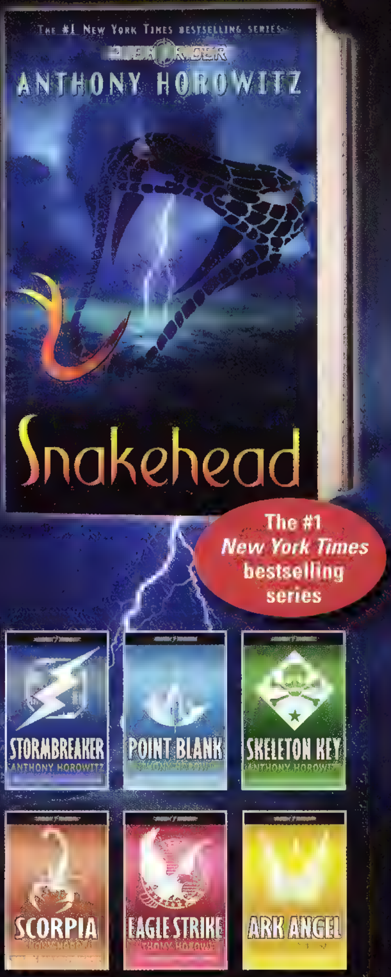
Nothing says friendly athletic competition like getting drilled in the temple. This ain't figure skating, Nancy.



The courts in Super Dodgeball Brawlers span the entire globe, and each has its own special attributes.

ALEX RIDER

in his deadliest and most dangerous mission yet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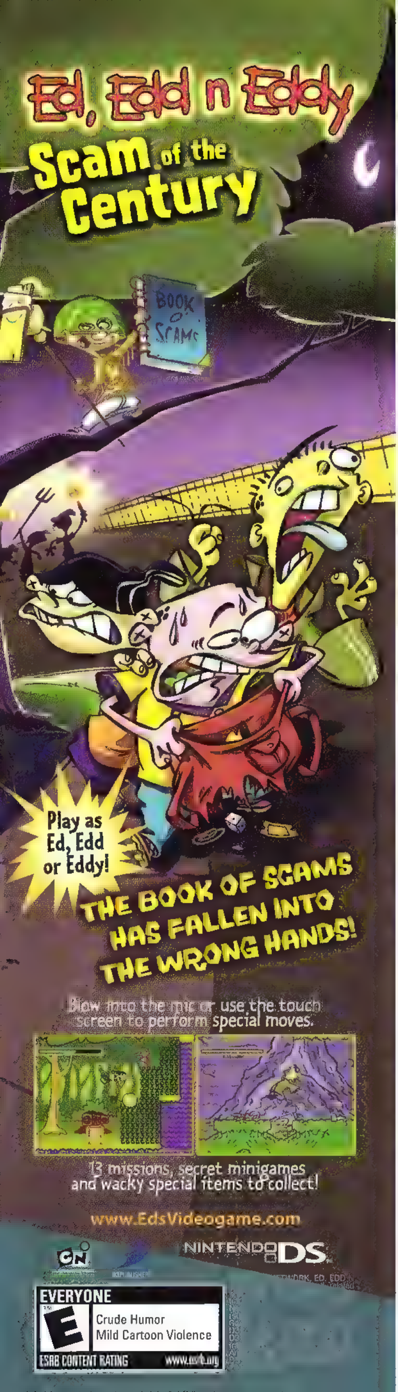
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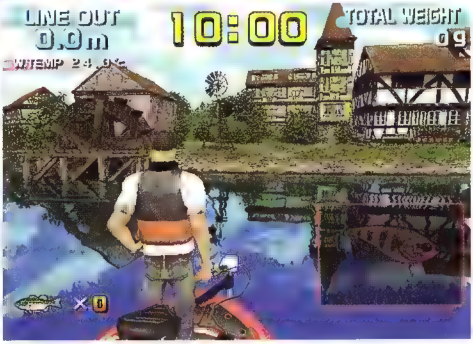
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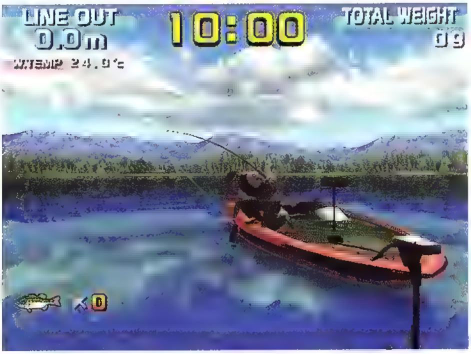
The Reel Deal

Get hooked on Sega's classic arcade fishing sim, rebuilt for Wii.

It seems like Sega has a neverending supply of properties ideally suited to the Wii. Next up is Sega Bass Fishing, based on the 1997 arcade hit (which later made its way to Dreamcast complete with fishing rod peripheral). The Wii version—due early next year—will allow virtual anglers to cast their line and reel it in using the motion functionality of the remote and nunchuk. The game includes Arcade, Tournament, Practice, and Nature Trip modes, and you can try to land the big one on 15 different lake environments. You also have the option to select the time of day and season, which affects the fish's behavior, their appetite, and the depth at which they swim. If you're taking requests, Sega, how about giving us a new Jet Set Radio next? Or Panzer Dragoon. Either one. —Kent K.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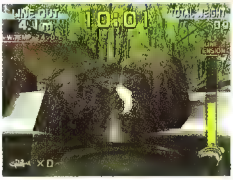
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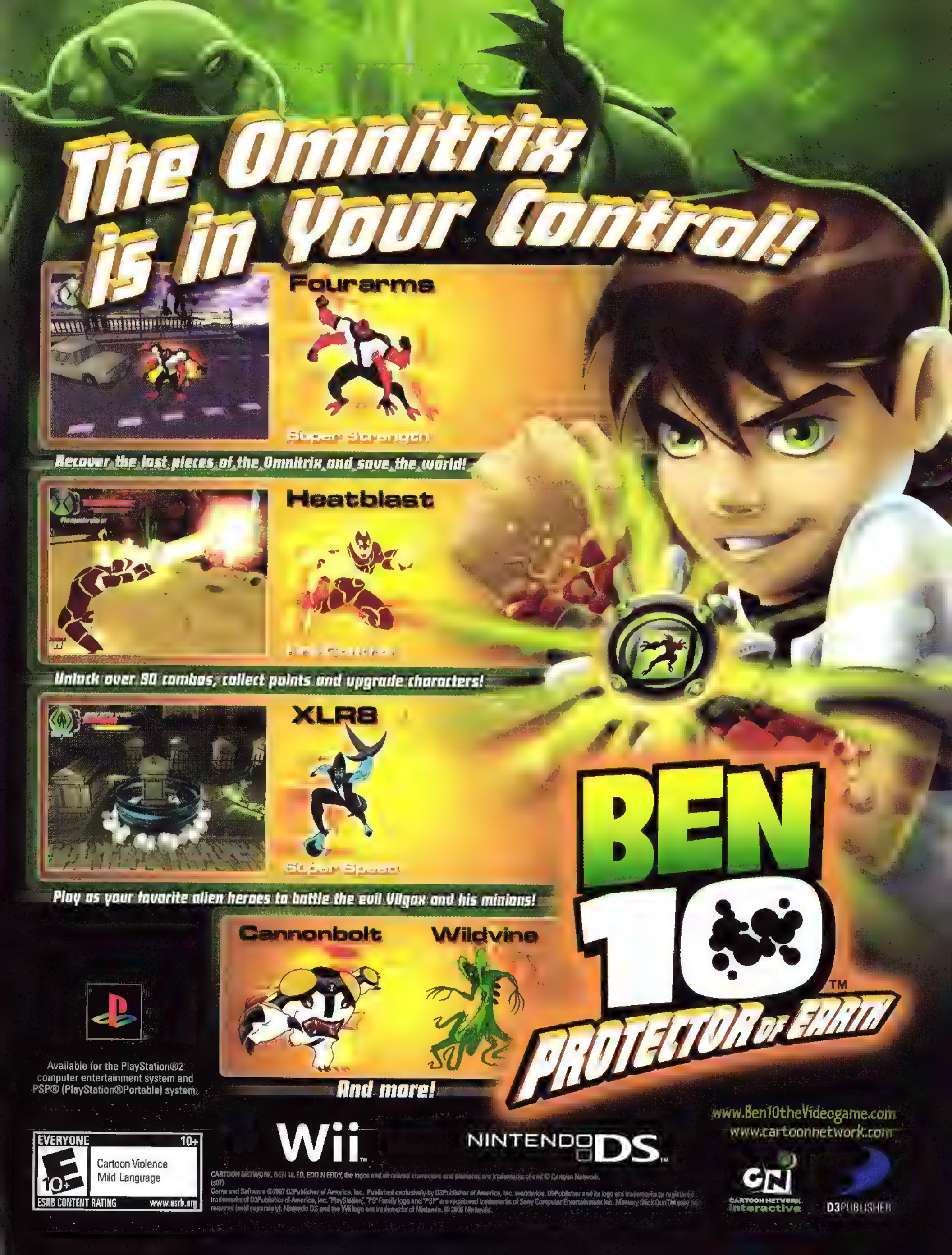
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GAME WATCH FORECAST

This month we're switching from our three-dot progress meter to more specific time frames. Just remember that ship dates move around all the time.

Wii		
Alvin and the Chipmunks	Brash	12/07
Blast Works: Build, Fuse & Destroy	Majesco	1/08
Bomberman Land	Hudson	1/08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	1/08
Bully: Scholarship Edition	Rockstar Games	1/08
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	Activision	11/07
Cabela's Monster Bass	Activision	1/08
Cars Mater-National	THQ	11/07
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	Game Factory	11/07
Cranium Kabookii	Ubisoft	12/07
Cruis'n	Midway	11/07
CSI: Hard Evidence	Ubisoft	1/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	THQ	3/08
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
The Dog Island	Ubisoft	3/08
Dragon Ball Z Budokai Tenkaichi 3	Atari	11/07
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	Square Enix	2/08
Emergency Mayhem	Codemasters	TBA
Endless Ocean	Nintendo	1/08
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	Nintendo	11/07
Furu Furu Park	Majesco	11/07
Game Party	Midway	11/07
Geometry Wars: Galaxies	Sierra	11/07
Ghost Squad	Sega	11/07
Godzilla Unleashed	Atari	11/07
The Golden Compass	Sega	12/08
Hanna Montana Spotlight World Tour	Disney Interactive	11/07
Harvest Moon Heroes	Natsume	1/08
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	Capcom	11/07
High School Musical: Sing It	Disney Interactive	11/07
History Channel: Battle for the Pacific	Activision	11/07
Indoor Sports	Konami	11/07
Iron Man	Sega	5/08
Jenga	Atari	11/07
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	LucasArts	11/07
Line Rider	InXile	Spr 08
London Taxi: Rush Hour	Activision	1/08
Link's Crossbow Training (with Zapper)	Nintendo	11/07
Luxor: Pharaoh's Challenge	Mumbo Jumbo	11/07
Manhunt 2	Rockstar Games	10/07
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	Sega	11/07
Mario Kart Wii*	Nintendo	Spr 08
Medal of Honor Heroes 2	Electronic Arts	11/07
Monster Lab	Eidos	Sum 08
Monster Truck Offroad	Destineer	12/07
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	Fall 08
MX vs. ATV Untamed	THQ	12/07
Mythmakers: Orbs of Doom	Destineer	11/07
Need For Speed Pro Street	Electronic Arts	11/07
Nights: Journey of Dreams	Sega	12/07
Nitrobike	Ubisoft	12/07
No More Heroes	Ubisoft	2/08
Obscure: The Aftermath	Ignition	Spr 08
Octopuzzle	Atlus/Conspiracy	TBA
Okami	Capcom	Spr 08
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	Namco Bandai	3/08
Petz Catz 2	Ubisoft	11/07
Petz Dogz 2	Ubisoft	11/07
Pimp My Ride	Activision	11/07
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	Crave	3/08
Project H.A.M.M.E.R.	Nintendo	TBA
Puppy Luv	Activision	11/07
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	D3 Publisher	11/07
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	Ubisoft	11/07
Rebel Raiders: Operation Nighthawk	Jack of All Games	11/07
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	Capcom	11/07
Runaway	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	1/08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	Spr 08
Samurai Warriors: Katana	Koei	1/08
Sea Monsters: A Prehistoric Adventure	Destination Software	11/07
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	Sega	Q1 08
Soulcalibur Legends	Namco Bandai	11/07
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Star Trek: Conquest	Bethesda Softworks	11/07
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	Spr 08
Super Mario Galaxy	Nintendo	11/07
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	2/08
Super Swing Golf: Season 2	Tecmo	12/07
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	TBA
Tomb Raider Anniversary	Eidos	11/07
Top Spin Tennis	2K Sports	Spr 08
Trauma Center: New Blood	Atlus	11/07
We Love Golf	Capcom	TBA
Wii Fit	Nintendo	TBA
Worms: A Space Oddity	THQ	3/08
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 08	THQ	11/07

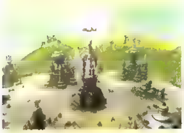
NINTENDO DS		
Ace Attorney: Apollo Justice	Capcom	2/08
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	Nintendo	1/21/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	TBA
Alvin and the Chipmunks	Brash Entertainment	12/07
Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?	THQ	11/07
Best of Tests DS	Conspiracy Entertainment	TBA
Bomberman Land Touch! 2	Hudson	1/08
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Bubble Bobble Double Shot	Ignition Entertainment	TBA
Build-A-Bear Workshop	Game Factory	11/07
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	Activision	11/07
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Contra 4	Konami	11/07
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner With Friends	Majesco	11/07
CSI: Dark Motives	Ubisoft	11/07
CSI: Miami Nights	Ubisoft	1/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
Disciples II	Strategy First	3/08
Disney Friends	Disney Interactive	3/08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Draglade	Atlus	11/07
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	Square Enix	11/07
Eco Creatures: Save the Forest	Majesco	TBA
Enchanted	Disney Interactive	11/07
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	Square Enix	11/07
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles Ring of Fates	Square Enix	3/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	TBA
Geometry Wars: Galaxies	Sierra	11/07
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	Atari	11/07
The Golden Compass	Sega	12/07
GoPets: Vactaion Island	Konami	1/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	1/08
Homie Rollerz	Destineer	3/08
Hot Wheels: Beat That!	Activision	11/07
Imagine: Figure Skater	Ubisoft	2/08
Insecticide	Gamecock Media Group	1/08
It's a Wonderful World	Square Enix	TBA
Jackass: The Game	Red Mile	1/08
Jenga	Atari	11/07
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	LucasArts	11/07
Line Rider	InXile	Spr 08
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	Sega	1/08
Mario Party DS	Nintendo	11/07
Master of Illusion	Nintendo	11/07
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	TBA
MX vs. ATV Untamed	THQ	12/07
My French Coach	Ubisoft	11/07
My Life Coach	Ubisoft	11/07
My Spanish Coach	Ubisoft	11/07
My Word Coach	Ubisoft	9/07
Need For Speed Prostreet	Electronic Arts	11/07
New Zealand Story Revolution	Ignition Entertainment	TBA
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	Tecmo	12/07
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Nintendo Crossword*	Nintendo	TBA
Ontamarama	Atlus	11/07
Orcs & Elves DS	Electronic Arts	11/07
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prey the Stars	Koei	3/08
Professor Branium's Games	Destineer	3/08
Professor Layton and the Curious Village	Nintendo	12/07
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	Ubisoft	11/07
River King: Mystic Valley	Natsume	TBA
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	4/08
Sonic RPG*	Sega	TBA
Spectrobes II	Disney Interactive	Fall 08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	Spr 08
Strawberry Shortcake: The Four Seasons Cake	Game Factory	11/07
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	Aksys	Spr 08
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	Ignition	Spr 08
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	1/08
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	1/08
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	Midway	11/07
Viva Pinata DS	TBA	TBA
Warhammer 40K: Squad Command	THQ	11/07
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
World Series of Poker 2008	Activision	11/07
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 08	THQ	11/07
Zoo Tycoon 2	THQ	2/08

* TENTATIVE TITLE

And the Winner Is . . .

Wii Sports honored at British awards ceremony

It seems the entire world has fallen in love with Wii Sports, including the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. At the academy's recent awards ceremony (often referred to as the "British Oscars"), the Wii pack-in took home six trophies, including those for "Best Gameplay" and "Most Innovative."



Spore Spreads

Will Wright's latest coming to Wii

In an interview with UK newspaper Guardian Unlimited, Will Wright confirmed that his eagerly anticipated universe sim Spore is headed to Wii. Unfortunately, the design luminary offered no further details (nor an estimated time of arrival).

Arts Investment

Electronic Arts gobbles up two more

Not to be outdone by Activision's recent purchase of Bizarre Creations, the house that Madden built recently announced the acquisition of acclaimed development studios BioWare and Pandemic. The deal, worth $775 million, should't affect projects already in development at the studios (such as BioWare's upcoming Sonic RPG for DS)

Three Great Holiday Gifts

From Your Friends at Natsume

NINTENDO DS
Rune Factory
A Fantasy Harvest Moon
NATSUME

Till the land, grow crops, catch fish, make friends and *battle monsters!* Battling against fierce beasts is very important for your survival, but making friends with them is essential for your farm life.

EVERYONE
E
Mild Fantasy Violence
Use of Alcohol
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Puzzle de Harvest Moon is a fast-paced, highly addictive puzzle game where you grow and harvest crops competing against your favorite Harvest Moon characters!

EVERYONE
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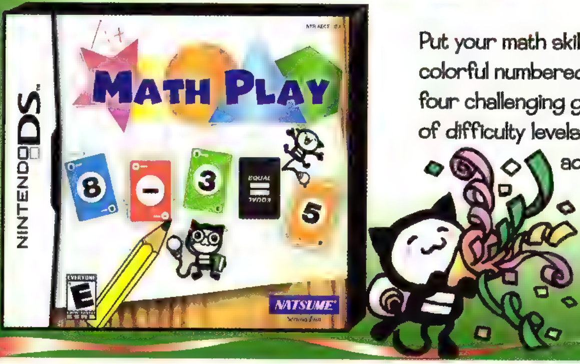
Visit www.esrb.org for more ratings information.
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS
Puzzle de HARVEST MOON
NATSUME



Put your math skills to the test as you arrange colorful numbered cards and create equations in four challenging game play modes. With a variety of difficulty levels, competitive multiplayer action and addictive puzzle play.

EVERYONE
E
Visit www.esrb.org for more ratings information.
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Wii Channels

Tune In and Game On

Between WiiWare games, new channel announcements, and great Virtual Console releases, there's a lot of downloadable goodness on the way.

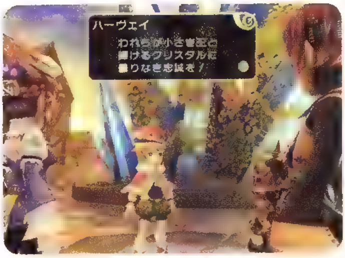
THIS MONTH:

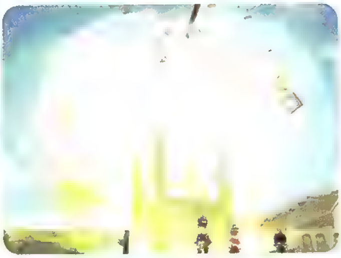
- WiiWare Games
- Upcoming Channels
- New Virtual Console Releases
- News & Notes

12
VC Games

JAPAN SHOWS ITS WARES

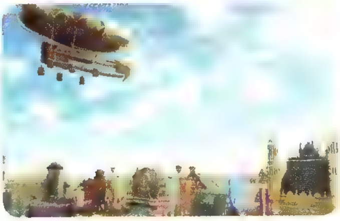
Virtual Console games are great, but what if you've got a hankering to download something new? As Nintendo reaffirmed a few months ago, original games called WiiWare will be available through the Wii Shop Channel in the near future, and at a conference held recently in Japan, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata unveiled what some of those titles will be. Original games, brand-new installments of hit franchises, and Wii versions of some familiar favorites were shown, spanning a variety of genres, from puzzles to shooters to RPGs. In addition to the games seen on these pages, more than 100 WiiWare games have been proposed, including a title called Pokémon Farm, in which your Miis can interact with Pokémon. Although the games shown have been announced only for Japan thus far, they should give a good idea of the types of games that players the world over will soon have access to. Let the games begin!

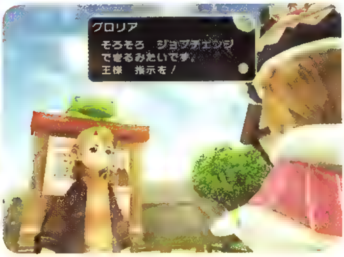


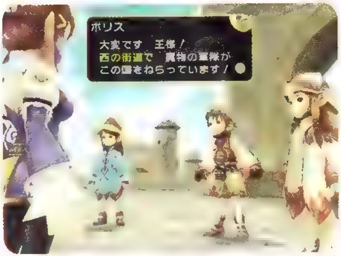


FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: THE YOUNG KING AND THE PROMISED LAND

Set after the events of the original Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles, The Young King and the Promised Land is a country-building simulation in which you'll create a kingdom from the ground up. Starting with an empty patch of land, you'll use the power of the crystals to build a castle and surrounding town (complete with a variety of shops), then expand your kingdom by collecting tax money and hiring adventurers to go on quests.







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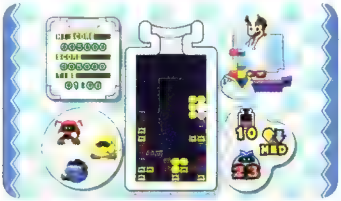
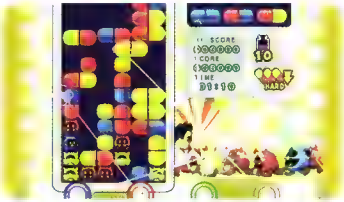
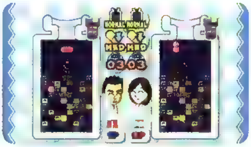
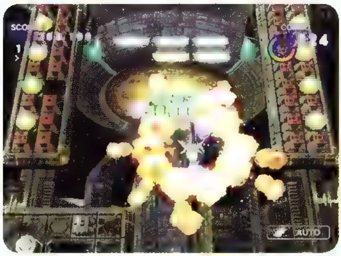






DR. MARIO'S VIRUS BUSTER

The color-matching, virus-busting action of Dr. Mario has been captivating puzzle-game fans since the NES days, and a new-and-improved version is going to be one of the first WiiWare releases. In addition to the ability to select your Miis in lieu of Mario as the vitamin-pushing doc, the game will feature Wi-Fi versus play and a four-player mode.



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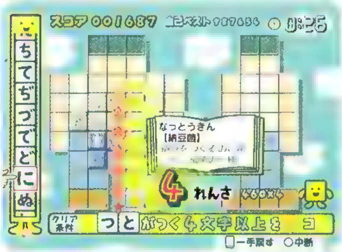
STAR SOLDIER R

Not straying too far from its roots, Star Soldier R is a vertically scrolling shooter from Hudson. As in other installments of this classic series, you'll blow through waves of enemies while collecting power-up capsules to increase your firepower. A ship attachment called a "force" can be utilized to increase your defensive or offensive capabilities.



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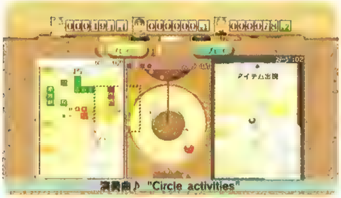
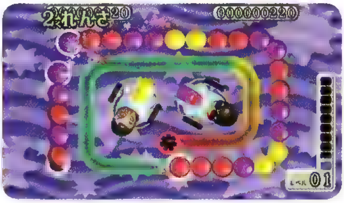
MOJIPITTAN

Mojipittan was originally conceived as an arcade game, and has since made its way to numerous home and portable systems, including GBA and DS. The game plays something like Scrabble, as players take turns building words. Don't expect this one to come to North America.



MARU BOU SHIKAKU

Maru Bou Shikaku translates as "circles, sticks, squares." Mix those basic shapes together and you get a simple-to-play puzzle game with a wood-block motif, in which you must move objects to clear stages. With a variety of challenges for multiple players, the game promises to be interesting and unique.



MINNA DE PUZZLOOP

If Puzzloop looks familiar, there's a reason why—it's been released in several other forms, including the DS game known as Magnetica in North America. As marbles roll down a curvy path, you must match up like colors to eliminate them from the playfield. The WiiWare version of Puzzloop features cooperative and competitive modes for up to four players.

NEWS & NOTES

Turbo CD Revving Up

The excellent shooter Gate of Thunder marked the arrival of TurboGrafx-16 CD games on Virtual Console, but that's just the beginning. Publisher Hudson has announced that at least three more Turbo CD-based games are on the way this fall (and some of them might be available by the time you read this). Get ready for the arrival of Ys: Book I & II (a pair of beloved action-RPGs), SimEarth (Will Wright's follow-up to SimCity), and The Dynastic Hero (a Turbo CD adaptation of Wonder Boy in Monster Land).

Give the Gift of Games

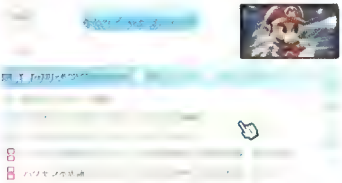
Hardcore gamers love revisiting their favorite classics—soon they'll be able to share that love by giving gifts of Virtual Console releases. According to an article in the Wall Street Journal, Wii Shop Channel users will be able to send games to other users as gifts as early as this December. Once the recipient accepts the gift, the game will download automatically.

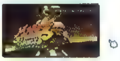
Join the Firm

If you aren't already using the latest Wii Menu software (version 3.1), be sure to go online and download it to take advantage of its new features. After you upgrade to the new software (you can perform the system update from your Wii System menu), you'll be able to use a USB keyboard with the message board and with the Internet Channel (which requires an upgrade that must be downloaded separately). You'll also be able to use a new version of the Everybody Votes Channel, which features more-detailed info for regional voting results.

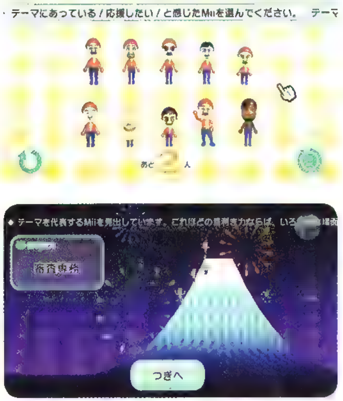
CHANNELS LINEUP EXPANDS

In an effort to get even more Wii owners to take their consoles online, Nintendo has announced two additional Wii channels that will be making their Japanese debuts this November. One of the new channels is the Mii Contest Channel, which will let you upload your own Miis, download Miis from other users, and compete to make the best Miis. Users will be encouraged to create Miis based on Nintendo-regulated themes, after which you'll be able to vote on your favorites. The other channel that will be joining the lineup is the Nintendo Channel for All, a game-information channel. Similar to information kiosks in retail outlets, the channel will let you view videos and commercials of Wii games, and, better yet, allow you to download demo software for the DS via Wi-Fi (similar to DS Download Stations). The channel also has the ability to keep track of which games you play and provide information on other titles you may enjoy, plus it lets you vote on games to recommend them to others. As of press time, the Mii Contest Channel and Nintendo Channel for All have not been confirmed for North America.





In the Nintendo Channel for All, users can download DS demos, or—as seen in the above screen—Wii and DS game videos.

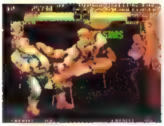


・テーマにあっている / 応援したい / と感じたMiiを選んでください。

Think you're a Mii-making master? The Mii Contest Channel gives you the chance to prove it. View the lineup, choose your favorites, and decide which Miis are the king of the hill.

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

WHAT'S NEW IN RETRO GAMING!



ART OF FIGHTING

Platform: NeoGeo
Publisher: SNK/D4
Genre: Fighting
Original Release: 1992

WHAT: One of SNK's premiere franchises, Art of Fighting is a one-on-one fighter notable for large, smoothly scaling character sprites and a power bar that limits special move use.

WHY: Art of Fighting's unique features make it one of the most challenging fighters of its era. The game is at its best in multiplayer mode. —CH

STAFF PICK!

MAGICIAN LORD

STEVE T'S PICK

[illegible]

FATAL FURY

Platform: NeoGeo
Publisher: SNK/D4
Genre: Fighting
Original Release: 1991

WHAT: When 2-D fighters ruled the gaming world, Fatal Fury was one of the top names in the genre. Choose from three heroes and defeat your foes with strikes and special attacks.

WHY: Fatal Fury laid the foundation for SNK's 2-D fighting empire. The ability to fight on two planes separates it from the competition. —CH

STAFF PICK!

GATE OF THUNDER

Platform: TurboGrafx-16 CD
Publisher: Hudson
Genre: Shooter
Original Release: 1992

WHAT: A legendary space shooter and one of the best reasons to own a Turbo CD back in the day.

WHY: Gate of Thunder took full advantage of the CD add-on with a rockin' soundtrack, lots of parallax scrolling, and some of the best sprite work ever seen on the Turbo. A must-play for fans of the genre. —ST

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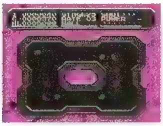
GOLDEN AXE III

Platform: Sega Genesis
Publisher: Sega
Genre: Action
Original Release: 1993

WHAT: The third game in Sega's hack-and-slash co-op action series isn't as good as the original Golden Axe, but it features lots of enemies to slay and beasts to ride.

WHY: Though it was included in recent Sega compilations, Golden Axe III wasn't released in the US back in the day. Now you can catch up with this nearly lost classic. —CH



LUNAR POOL

Platform: NES
Publisher: FCI/D4
Genre: Sports
Original Release: 1987

WHAT: Pool games are usually pretty boring, but pool games set on *the moon*? Still pretty boring as it turns out. Lunar Pool's selection of wacky tables does give the boredom some variety at least.

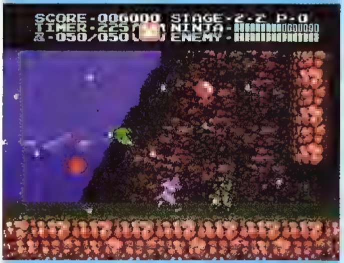
WHY: If you won the lottery and can't figure out what to do with all that money, Lunar Pool is certainly one way to get rid of five bucks. —ST

METAL MARINES

Platform: Super NES
Publisher: Namco Bandai
Genre: Strategy
Original Release: 1993

WHAT: A real-time strategy game in which opposing forces try to destroy each others' bases using mechanized infantry and long-range missiles.

WHY: You shouldn't expect much in terms of unit or mission variety (StarCraft this is not), but reminiscent of a good board game, Metal Marines is fun despite its limitations. —ST



NINJA GAIDEN II: THE DARK SWORD OF CHAOS

Chris H's Pick

STAFF PICK!

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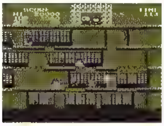


NINJA JAJAMARU-KUN

Platform: NES (Famicom)
Publisher: Jaleco
Genre: Action
Original Release: 1985

WHAT: Simple arcade-style action makes its North American debut via VC. Defeat enemies with your shuriken to rescue the princess.

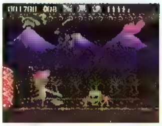
WHY: If you're truly hardcore, you're most likely to appreciate Ninja JaJaMaru-Kun's old-school gameplay, stiff challenge, and Japan-only origins. —CH

STAFF PICK!

CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

Chris H's Pick

[illegible]



SAMURAI-GHOST

Platform: TurboGrafx-16
Publisher: Namco Bandai
Genre: Action
Original Release: 1992

WHAT: As a samurai back from the dead, you must slash your way through an army of underworld foes. Both your fighting and platforming skills will be put to the test.

WHY: Variable fighting stances and detailed animations give the game a unique feel. Samurai Ghost may be the best name for a video game ever. —CH

WORLD HEROES

Platform: NeoGeo
Publisher: SNK/D4
Genre: Fighting
Original Release: 1992

WHAT: It's like *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* if all of the historical figures decided to beat the crap out of each other in a one-on-one fighting tournament.

WHY: World Heroes is pretty simplistic compared to modern fighters, but the big sprites were a marvel for their time. Plus, where else can you pit Genghis Khan against Hulk Hogan? —ST

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Brawling, racing, exploring, destroying, and more—2008 is looking good!

Bomberman Land Touch! 2 Pg. 36
Final Fantasy IV Pg. 32
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law Pg. 34
Mario Kart for Wii Pg. 31
MX vs. ATV Untamed Pg. 32
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure Pg. 36
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity Pg. 33
Super Smash Bros. Brawl Pg. 30
Worms: A Space Oddity Pg. 34

Simply Smashing

>SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO • RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2008

While it's a bummer that Brawl won't be ready until February 10th, there's good news, too—we here at Nintendo Power got to spend two days playing it! How is that good news for you? Well, er . . . because we'll tell you all about it. (Please don't hate us.)

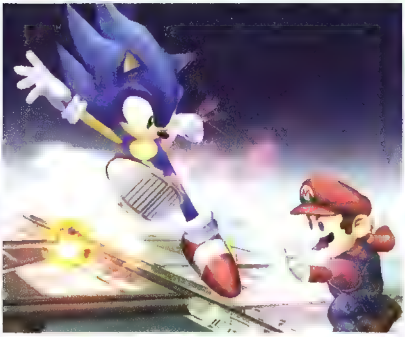
We first tried the game with the Classic controller, which took some getting used to. One drawback is the hard-to-hit Z Button, which, as in Super Smash Bros. Melee, is used for throws. The remote-only option is kind of neat, but we probably won't end up using it regularly. In this control style the Wii remote is held sideways, with the 1 and 2 buttons used for attacks. Reaching underneath to hit B for the shield was wonky, as was using the tiny + and - buttons.

As for the new characters, Sonic is our initial favorite. He controls great despite his superspeed, and homing in on opponents with his spin attack is a blast. Our very first fight was between Mario and Sonic, and it was just as cool as you'd hope. As for some of the other rookies, Ike is very slow but very powerful, you can get good with Meta Knight fast thanks to his rapid-fire sword attacks, Pit's tricky gliding and ability to bend the trajectory of his arrows skews him toward expert players, and Diddy Kong's goofy animations give him a unique feel that—surprisingly—makes him one of our favorites.

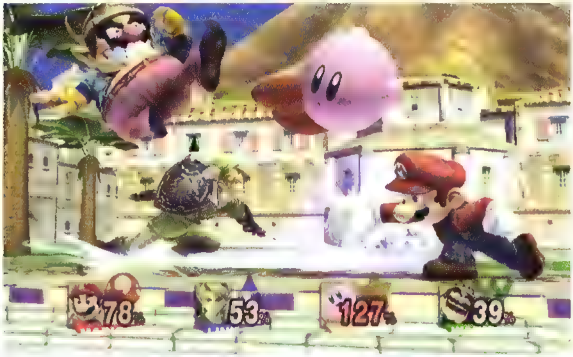
Final Smashes are a fantastic addition. During a two-minute match, a Smash Ball typically appears about three times. Its appearance causes instant chaos as everyone battles to reach it first. These attacks almost always result in at least one knockout (usually more). However, a skilled defender always has a chance to avoid a Final Smash. For instance, one of Nintendo's seasoned Smash vets avoided my Sonic's deadly flybys with expertly timed midair dodges.

What else did we see? Ah, Assist Trophies! They rock. We were run over by tiny Advance Wars tanks, a giant Metroid sucked our brains, and more. Also, a couple of other quick points: thrown items are easier to catch than in Melee, and it is now possible to jump between performing an air dodge and landing.

Brawl is just as mind-blowingly amazing as we expected it to be. A couple more months isn't very long to wait in the grand scheme of things, and we now know for certain what it'll be more than worth the wait. —CHRIS SL.



Everybody wants in on the action, even Sonic the Hedgehog and Little Mac.



A Very Smart Kart

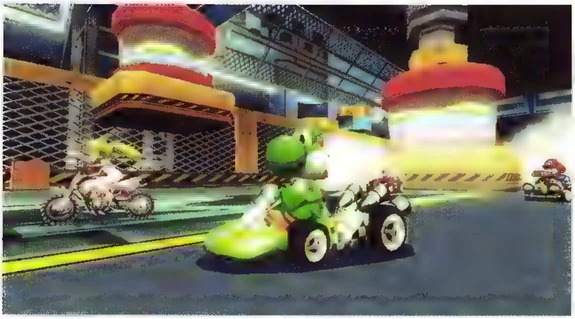
>MARIO KART FOR Wii

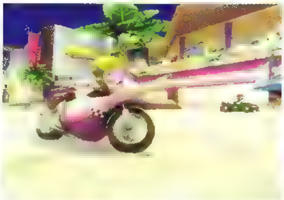
PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO • RELEASE: SPRING 2008

Some days just rock, like the day you get your driver's license or the day you win the lottery. For me, getting to test-drive Mario Kart for Wii was like combining both those events. Nintendo's president, Satoru Iwata, spilled a few beans in an early-October presentation (this month's News section has more revelations from that event). He excited Kart fans by confirming that the game will include Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection races for as many as 12 players, shortened times for matching up players online, intuitive steering-wheel control that will make it easier for novices to compete with veteran Karters, and the debut of motorcycles in the Mario Kart series. The video clips that Nintendo showcased online also hinted at the ability to perform cool stunts, such as pulling a wheelie with a motorcycle or spinning your kart 360 degrees in the air. I'm here to tell you that it's not just smoke and mirrors. Not only does executing a successful stunt look cool—you'll get a sweet reward when you do it. (Sorry I can't be more specific—the version I played is still quite early, and lots may change between now and spring 2008, when the game is slated to launch.)

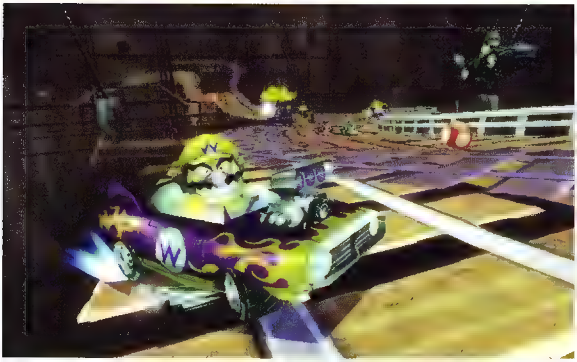
As for the return of Kart must-haves, expect 16 brand-new courses and lots of familiar race locations based on tracks from throughout the series, enhanced with new features, of course, and boasting much greater visual detail than in any previous Kart title. You'll sample this eye candy in the character animations and track elements such as rushing water or exploding fireballs. As for items, expect some big newbies along with the tried-and-true Koopa shells, bananas, lightning bolts, and varieties of mushrooms. It's too early to comment on all the game modes, but in addition to Grand Prix circuits, a variety of engine classes, and the online multiplayer races, there are sure to be several more challenges. You can also expect a colorful variety of kart styles, as seen in our screenshots.

Maybe the biggest question I had before playing the game was how the motion-based control would handle sharp corners and twisting courses. I can sum up the answer with a single word—*smoothly*. As Mr. Iwata stated, driving a kart will feel perfectly natural to anyone who has ever used a steering wheel. You hold the Wii remote in both hands with the buttons facing you (and that's how it will fit into the steering-wheel accessory). Then you turn the "wheel" left or right. If you tilt it steeply, you'll make a sharp turn. A gentle dip will ease you to one side. Buttons control acceleration, braking, and item use. I was blown away by the game's elegance (even the sound was great), and there are several months of development yet to go. We'll reveal much more leading up to the launch. —SCOTT P.

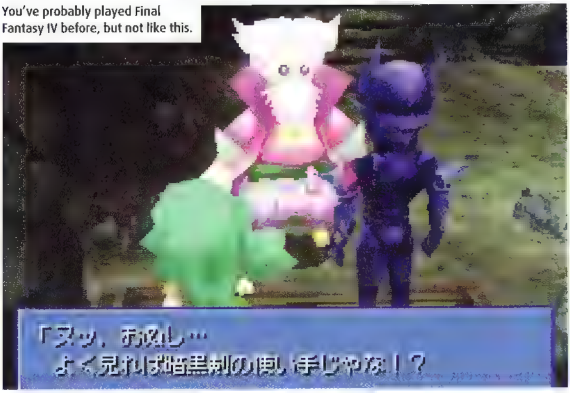




We always suspected that Peach had another side, but who knew she was a biker chick?



OK, so we can believe that Wario was able to scam his ride off of some unsuspecting sap, but where the heck does Donkey Kong get a muscle car?


You've probably played Final Fantasy IV before, but not like this.

陛下に悪があるとはいえ、[illegible]の
名に恥じるまねをできるわけなかろう。

今までのあやまちをつぐなうためにも…
こいつを…、過去の俺自身を倒す…！」

See Cecil in 3-D

>FINAL FANTASY IV

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: MATRIX SOFTWARE • RELEASE: 2008

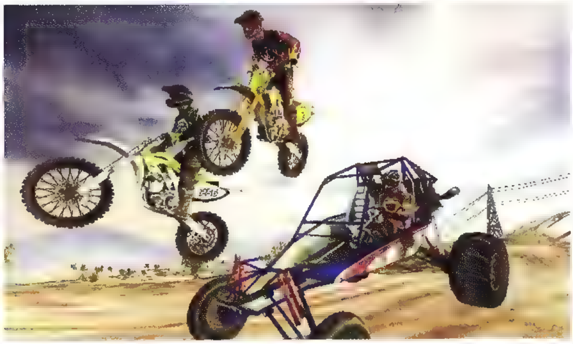
There's nothing final about Final Fantasy. Square Enix will keep riding that horse until it bucks, and it appears to be smooth galloping for the foreseeable future, especially since the RPG giant has classics like Final Fantasy IV in its stable. First released on the Super NES as Final Fantasy II, FFIV is the *Casablanca* of video games—a title that every role-playing fan has to experience at least once for its long story, great tuning, and epic battles. Even those who played the game the first time around, or after one of its numerous re-releases (most recently on the GBA in 2005), will discover a new world with the DS remake—one that, like last year's dazzling DS release of FFIII, is captured in full 3-D for the first time. The developer also promises updated character designs and new episodes to further deepen the story of Dark Knight Cecil and his twisted family history. The improvements are welcome, of course, but the masters at Square Enix have proven already that graphics are only as good as the gameplay that they support. That's why we'll keep coming back to FFIV no matter how many times it's released. —GEORGE S.

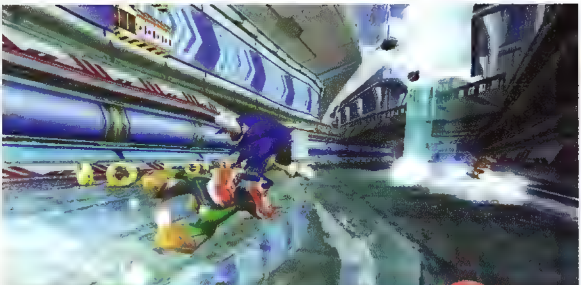
Playing Dirty

>MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

PLATFORM: Wii (also on DS) • PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: INCINERATOR • RELEASE: DECEMBER 2007

After tearing up the track for years on other platforms, THQ's off-road racing series is landing on Nintendo systems for the first time with its latest incarnation—MX vs. ATV Untamed. The game is being tailored specifically for Wii with two control setups (you can hold the remote sideways like a steering wheel, or steer with the nunchuk's analog stick) and motion-based stunts, but the title is staying true to its hardcore racing roots in terms of depth and features. As the title implies, the game lets you select from motocross racing bikes, ATVs, and more, then hit the dirt in numerous game modes, including Nationals (outdoor racing), Supercross (indoor racing), Supermoto (a combination of off-road and street racing), Opencross (racing in varied, rugged terrain), and waypoint-based Rally races. If you aren't in the mood for a full-length race, you can participate in mini-competitions such as hill-climbs, ski-jumps, and gap-jumping events. Add in vehicle customization, online versus play, and a fully licensed soundtrack, and you have one robust racing title. —CHRIS H.


Whether you're on bikes, buggies, or ATVs, crazy stunts and wild jumps are the order of the day.



Wild Ride

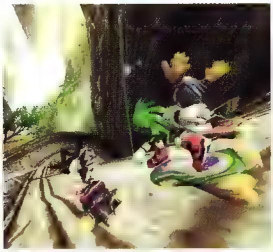
>SONIC RIDERS: ZERO GRAVITY

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA • RELEASE: Q1 2008

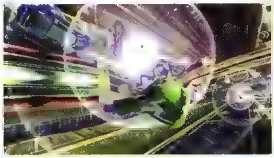
As Sonic and friends rev up for another go on the hoverboard circuit, we recently had a chance to take the high-speed hijinx for a test ride. Zero Gravity builds on the basic mechanics of the original Sonic Riders, but it cranks up the intensity with some major new additions. The most significant is that executing tricks now earns you Gravity Points, which you can use to perform a number of special moves. Gravity Control allows you to latch onto a wall and race along the side of it, Gravity Drift lets you turn on a dime, and Gravity Dive sends you flying through the air with such velocity that any objects nearby, be they small robots or an entire passenger train, are pulled toward you (and smashing through said objects gives you an extra boost). Though it takes a bit of practice to get the hang of these new maneuvers, they definitely give the game a unique feel.

As in the previous Sonic Riders, certain shortcuts and secret routes can be accessed only via one of three special abilities: grinding rails, temporarily taking flight, or smashing through obstacles. In Zero Gravity, however, those abilities are tied to your board rather than to your rider, and you can use them only once you've collected the required number of rings during a race. A variety of boards are available for purchase, and each provides additional benefits—such as increasing your maximum speed or upgrading your tricks—that are likewise activated by accumulating the requisite rings. These changes allow you to switch things up without relinquishing your favorite character.

One of the highlights of the first Sonic Riders was the crazy track design, and the sequel follows suit. There's a ton going on with each course, and watchful racers will constantly find new ways to shave precious seconds off their time. The action looks pretty good, as well, with an impressive draw distance and consistently smooth frame rate. Aside from some issues with the motion controls (the game does give you the option to use a GameCube controller instead of the remote), Zero Gravity seems to be coming together nicely. —STEVE T.



Jet and the Babylon Rogues return to make life difficult for Sonic. Expect a number of secret characters to join the festivities as well.



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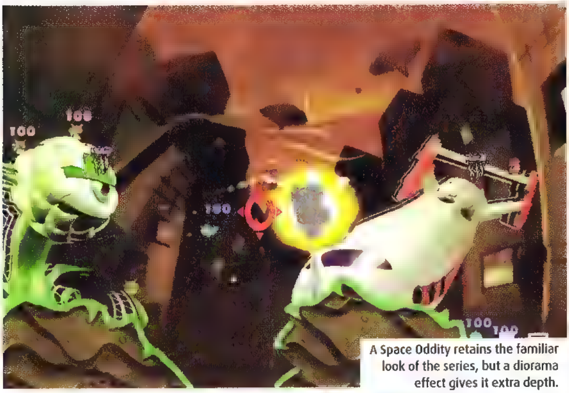
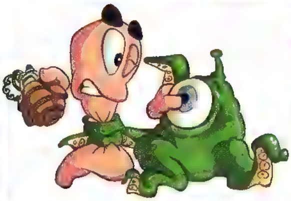
Space Crawl

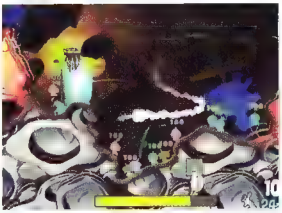
>WORMS: A SPACE ODDITY

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: TEAM17 • RELEASE: MARCH 2008

The Worms franchise has seen release on just about every platform in existence (I think there was even a Speak & Spell version), so it should come as no surprise that Team17's war-mongering annelids are headed to Wii. The overall formula hasn't changed much: players take turns moving the diminutive combatants on a 2-D battlefield and using all manner of weaponry to reduce their opponents to fish food. The controls have been altered, however, to take advantage of the Wii remote. You'll pull back on the controller and flick it forward to toss a grenade, for instance, or use the pointer to guide a homing missile to its target. In keeping with the space theme, each stage takes place on a different planet with varying levels of gravity and unique environmental attributes. The game offers a full slate of multiplayer modes (though no online play, unfortunately), as well as new motion-centric party games that you'll unlock by progressing through the story mode. –STEVE T.


A Space Oddity retains the familiar look of the series, but a diorama effect gives it extra depth.



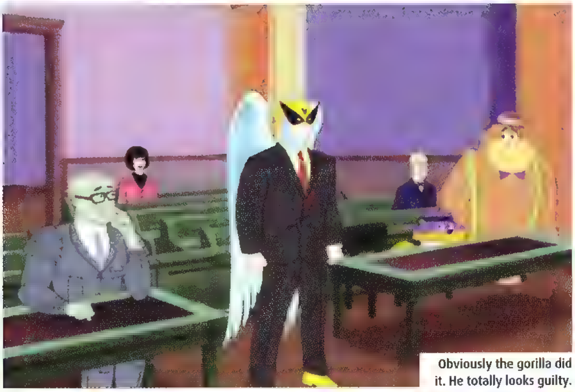


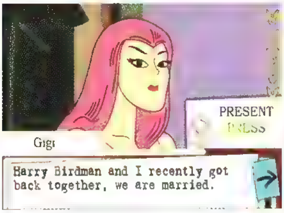
Disorder in the Court

>HARVEY BIRDMAN: ATTORNEY AT LAW

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: HIGH VOLTAGE • RELEASE: JANUARY 2008

He'll take the case! Straight from the Adult Swim TV show on the Cartoon Network, superhero-turned-lawyer Harvey Birdman is landing on Wii to defend the innocent (or even the guilty; he's not that picky) in five humorous cases. The gameplay of Harvey Birdman is similar to that of Capcom's Ace Attorney series; in court you press witnesses for information and present evidence to prove that they're lying, and outside of court you point and click to converse with suspects and investigate crime scenes. As bizarre as the Ace Attorney games get, however, they can't compare to the zany antics of Harvey Birdman. You may find yourself suddenly working for the prosecution instead of the defense, or end up arguing against your evil clone, and you never know when a random cartoon or video game character is going to make a cameo appearance. Excellent voice acting (primarily performed by the show's original cast) adds to the fun. –CHRIS H.


Obviously the gorilla did it. He totally looks guilty.



Gigi

Harry Birdman and I recently got back together, we are married.

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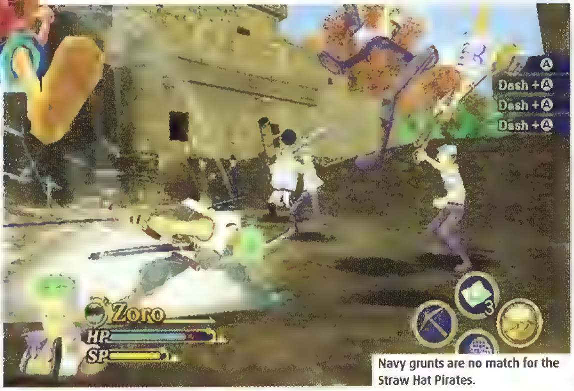
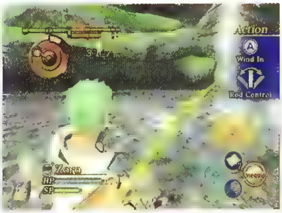
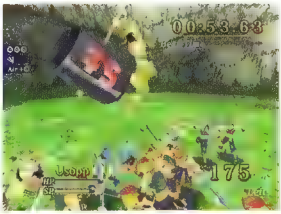


Navy grunts are no match for the Straw Hat Pirates.



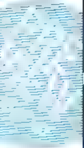


Land Ho!

>ONE PIECE: UNLIMITED ADVENTURE

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: GANBARION • RELEASE: Q1 2008

It seems like just another day at sea when Luffy, rubber-armed leader of the Straw Hat Pirates, finds a mysterious blue crystal orb while fishing. The next thing he knows, he and his crew are shipwrecked on a vast island that appears out of nowhere, and apparently the power of the orb is to blame—not only can it raise landmasses and alter terrain, but it reacts to people's memories and apparently holds the ability to grant humanity's happiness. What's it all mean? An expansive, exploration-filled quest in which you can take control of Luffy or any of his seven companions, each with their own upgradable attacks and special abilities. As you try to solve the mystery of the island (and hopefully find plentiful treasure in the process), you'll fight legions of enemy soldiers, challenge bosses, and use motion-based controls to utilize tools like a pickax and fishing rod (which you create by combining items). In addition to the story mode, you can enjoy the game in survival and versus modes. —CHRIS H.



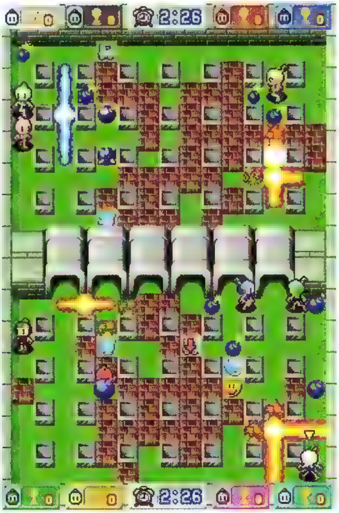
Explosive!

>BOMBERMAN LAND TOUCH! 2

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: HUDSON
DEVELOPER: HUDSON • RELEASE: JANUARY 2008

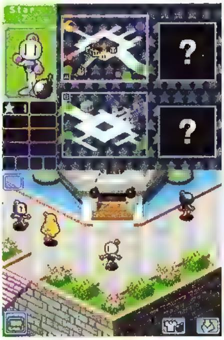
Oh, Bomberman, will we ever tire of your explosive antics? Not if Hudson has anything to say about it—and, to be honest, we wouldn't have it any other way. See, despite all those multiplayer games out there vying for our attentions, we have a special place in our hearts for good old Bomberman.

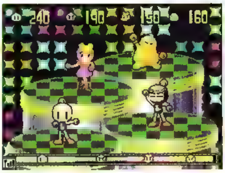
So it's comforting to see that Bomberman Land Touch! 2 includes the original Bomberman Battle mode, with some new maps and items to keep things fresh. But this is a new game, and that means new features. For those who prefer a solitary experience, Touch! 2's single-player adventure mode involves a bizarro Evil Bomberman and two alternate endings. But as you should know by now, the real fun is in blowing up your friends. Play with three others in one of 40 (!) new minigames, or play with eight others via Nintendo Wireless Connection. Even better is the four-player multiplayer via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, which should keep all of us Bomberman fans coming back for more. —JUSTIN C.



What's more fun than blowing up your friends? Up to eight players can partake in the explosive antics of dual-screen battle mode.

In the single-player adventure mode (below), you'll explore fun-filled lands and play a wide variety of minigames.





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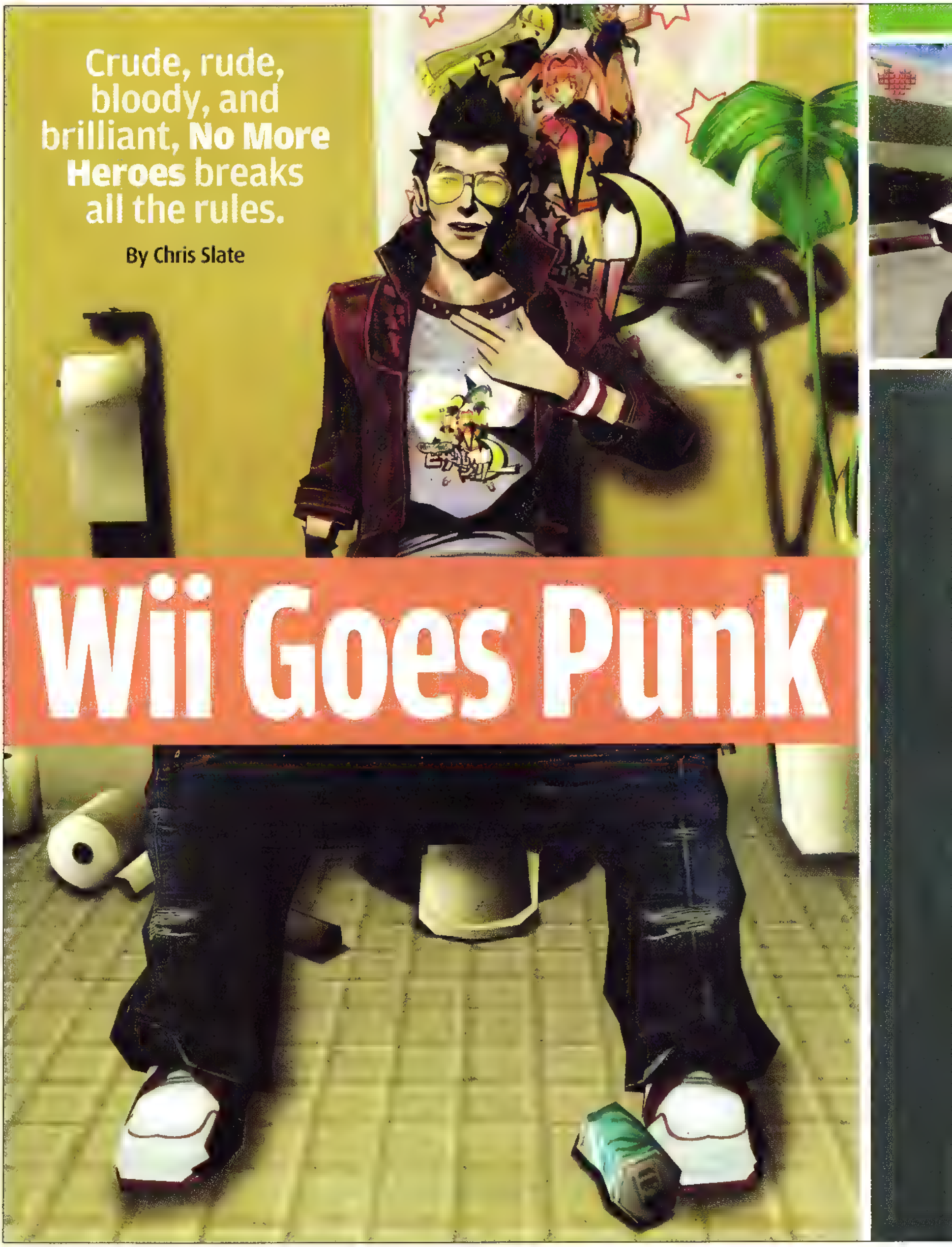
Wii Goes Punk

Crude, rude, bloody, and brilliant, **No More Heroes** breaks all the rules.

By Chris Slate



Ultrabloody battles? Crude humor? Supersexy villainesses? At first, No More Heroes seems like a strange fit for the Wii. On a console famous for Nintendo's cutesy characters and family-friendly party games, this hyperactive M-rated gorefest stands out like a dropkick to the face. But dig a little deeper and you'll find a game with a maverick spirit that rages against the status quo and turns gaming on its ear. This is the kind of game that Wii was *built* for.

No More Heroes serves up hack-and-slash action stages connected by a Grand Theft Auto-type city environment. It's the brainchild of cult-favorite game director Goichi Suda ("Suda 51" to his fans) and his team at Grasshopper Manufacture, the studio responsible for the GameCube's Killer 7 and the DS's Contact. Suda is one of the world's most experimental game creators, infusing his projects with an incredibly wild, offbeat style. Playing his No More Heroes is like watching a Quentin Tarantino film—it's a visceral, over-the-top love letter to some of the director's favorite things. It doesn't take long, for example, to realize Suda's passion for professional wrestling (nearly everything in the game is named after a type of suplex) or his love of retro gaming (the menu graphics and sound effects are Atari 2600 bleeptastic).

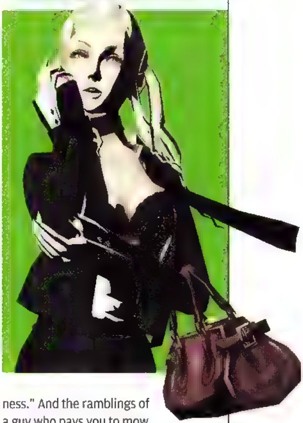
The game is packed with hilariously cool ideas that other developers might joke about but wouldn't have the guts to go through with. "Use the remote as a cell phone? Yeah, let's do it! Save by sitting on a toilet? That's gotta be in there! Play with your cat between assassination missions? Of course!" It's obvious that the creators are having a blast making this game, and the fun is contagious.

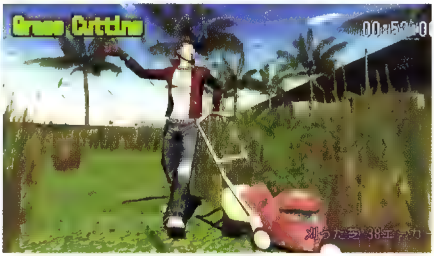
Suda and company seem to have gotten special glee out of naming things. Case in point: Santa Destroy, the fictional California city the game takes place in. Characters have names like Destroyman, Death Metal, and Dr. Peace, and locations include Burger Suplex, Pizza Butt, Rounding Body Press Station, and Beef Head (a video store—of course!).

The wackiness continues with ridiculously lovable dialogue. For instance, these words of encouragement are given before a boss fight: "You are the man! Eye of the tiger! Enter the red zone! Now, off to the garden of madness." And the ramblings of a guy who pays you to mow his lawn: "The God of Lawns shall smile upon all who mow them! Cut, cut, cut and mow!" And who could forget the hero's battle cry of "Strawberry on the shortcake!"?

As in Tarantino's *Kill Bill*, the bloodshed in No More Heroes is comic-book crazy. This definitely isn't a game for kids, but at the same time, the brutality is so "Finish Him!" outrageous that you'll laugh instead of cringe. Enemies explode into gushers, pedestrians fly through the air when run over, and bosses continue speeches after losing more than just the match. It's a morally gray world where everyone's a bad guy, the hero's goal is to be the world's top assassin, and what's right or wrong doesn't really matter anyway because it's all so silly.

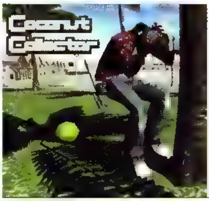
[Above] There's no way we could show the crazy carnage in this game. [Below] Sylvia is Travis's mysterious contact to the world of assassins.





ODD JOBS

When Travis needs to earn some cash, he can stop by the job center to see what new minigames are available. Whether mowing lawns or carrying coconuts, each offers unique Wii remote controls and ridiculous setups.



While No More Heroes won't hit until February, we were lucky enough to be the first to play through the entire game (craziest ending ever, by the way). We've been sworn to secrecy on characters and plot points that come later in the story, but read on to learn everything about how the game is played, from climbing the assassins' ranks to collecting coconuts.

THE BASICS

The player controls a smart-mouthed punk named Travis Touchdown, a total otaku who spends his time collecting plastic models of characters from his favorite anime (*Pure White Lover Bizarre Jelly*) and watching pro-wrestling videos. He wins a Beam Sword in an online auction and stumbles onto a mysterious association that arranges death matches between the world's top assassins. Needing cash and feeling a burning desire to prove himself, Travis becomes a hitman and starts the game ranked 11th.

The game generally progresses like this: Travis cruises around town on his bike (named "Schpeltiger"—don't ask us why) looking for work, taking on odd jobs and assassination contracts until he earns enough money to pay the entry fee for the next ranked fight. He deposits the money into an ATM, then returns to his room at the No More Heroes motel to receive a phone call from Sylvia, his seductive contact at the association, who tells him where the match will be. Finally, Travis drives to the match location and fights through waves of enemies on his way to his ranked opponent. After finishing off his adversary, Travis goes up in rank and earns a Zelda-like upgrade to his life meter. A cinema scene moves the story along, then Travis begins the entire cycle over, working to earn the entrance fee for the next ranked match.

PAINT THE TOWN RED

There are fun distractions between the ranked matches—for example, job minigames and assassination side missions can be played and replayed to earn medals and cash. Also, Naomi—Travis's weapons provider—will sell him new Beam Katanas or upgrade his current ones at her lab, and Travis can improve his stats by training with his mentor, Thunder Ryu. He can also rent wrestling tapes from the Beef Head video store to learn new throws, or buy new clothes at the trendy Area 51.

Despite the Grand Theft Auto-style city layout, this isn't the kind of game where you can spend hours jumping off ramps and messing with pedestrians. The city is really there only to be traveled through as you move from one location to the next; all of the real action takes place indoors, and the only vehicle you can control is your bike. Getting around is still fun, though—the Z Button gives Travis's bike a flaming boost, swinging the remote sideways while braking cuts a 90-degree turn, and the bike will jump if you swing the remote upward.

Additionally, items called Lovikov Balls are scattered across the city. You can collect them and trade them for new attacks and abilities. Unlike similar scavenger hunts in the Grand Theft Auto games, the locations of the balls are shown on the onscreen minimap, so tracking them all down is much less daunting.

GETTING PAID

Progressing through the game's levels, story, and list of items all require the same thing: money. In addition to taking cash from fallen enemies and the occasional treasure chest, there are two other main ways to rake in dough: accept a job or take on an assassination contract.

Cool *Akira*-style bike? Beam Katana? Anime toy collection? If this guy weren't crazy, we'd want to hang out with him.

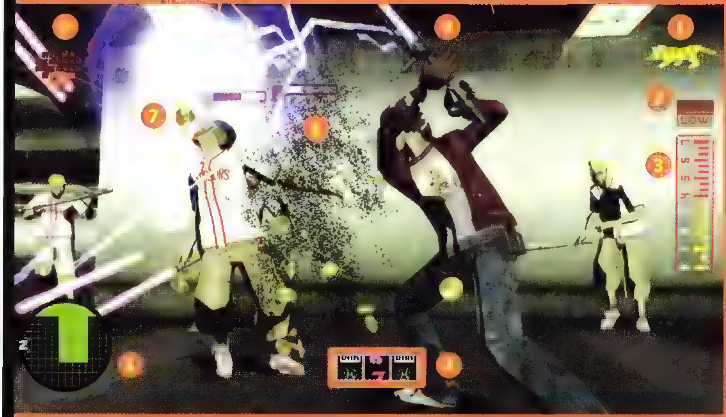
SCHPELTIGER

Travis's big, bad bike may be the only vehicle that he can ride, but it comes fully loaded with nitrous and the ability to perform wheelie jumps at any time. The A Button is the gas pedal, B is the brake, and Z is turbo. The bike can take 90-degree turns on a dime if you tap the brake and wave the Wii remote sideways, and raising the remote will trigger a jump. And if Travis forgets where he parked, you can hit the 1 Button to call his buddy at the video store to drive the bike over to him.

THAT'S GOTTA HURT

Combat

[illegible]



[illegible]

1 [illegible] This tiger stays crouched, ready to pounce, until Travis enters a Dark Side mode. Then, the tiger stands and slowly walks to a goal post that appears at the top center of the screen, which illustrates how long Dark Side mode will last.

2 [illegible] This icon confirms whether Travis is currently holding the Beam Katana high or low.

3 [illegible] This bar shows the Beam Katana's charge level.

4 [illegible] Performing a Death Blow spins the slots; if they match, Travis enters a Dark Side mode.

5 [illegible] Just like in the Grand Theft Auto games, this small map shows what's in the immediate area.

6 [illegible] Each pixel used to shape this heart is one point of health. No new pixels are added when Travis's max life is increased; instead, the heart simply turns a different shade.

7 [illegible] Fallen enemies send coins flying everywhere, which home in on Travis so he doesn't have to stop dealing out beatings to collect his rewards.

8 [illegible] This screen is from the Japanese version of the game which trades flying red blood for a less alarming black spray. We probably couldn't print a similar scene from the US version—it'd just be too messy.

9 [illegible] Simply press the A Button to slash, or hold down A to charge up a more powerful strike. Quick combos can be pulled off by tapping A repeatedly.

The job center will hook Travis up with a wide range of minigames—everything from collecting coconuts to mowing lawns. Each plays differently and features unique Wii controls. Only one job is available at first, but a new one is unlocked every time Travis beats a boss and gains a rank.

Successfully completing a job will unlock a new mission at K Entertainment, a front company for assassination contractors. These missions are usually timed and come with unique rules (defeat 100 enemies, fight using only wrestling throws, win without taking a hit, etc.).

The game moves along at a brisk pace and never has you collecting cash for very long. Die-hard players will want to put more work into the moneymaking activities so that they can afford every item in the game, but generally, clearing one or two jobs and missions will net enough cash to let you enter the next ranked match.

CLIMBING THE LADDER

Ranked fights are where the real action is, and where No More Heroes really shines. After paying the entrance fee to uncover the location of the next ranked match, Travis hops on his supersized bike and jets to the battleground. Once there, he has to run from one end of the area to the other while taking on hordes of bad guys that stand in his way. Treasure chests are hidden around corners and down alternate paths and contain health, collectible trading cards, money, or a battery charge for Travis's Beam Katana.

Speaking of which, the Beam Katana will lose some of its charge after every block or strike, with more-powerful attacks draining it faster. However, it can be endlessly recharged by entering "charge" mode (a quick press of the 1 Button) and shaking the Wii remote as fast as possible. Travis, in turn, will shake his Beam Katana while the charge meter refills, during which time he is completely defenseless. Knowing when—and how much—to charge your weapon is a key strategy when facing large groups of enemies.

Naomi builds Beam Katanas and upgrade parts at her lab, but she won't part with them for cheap.

HE LIVES IN A MOTEL?

Travis's Room

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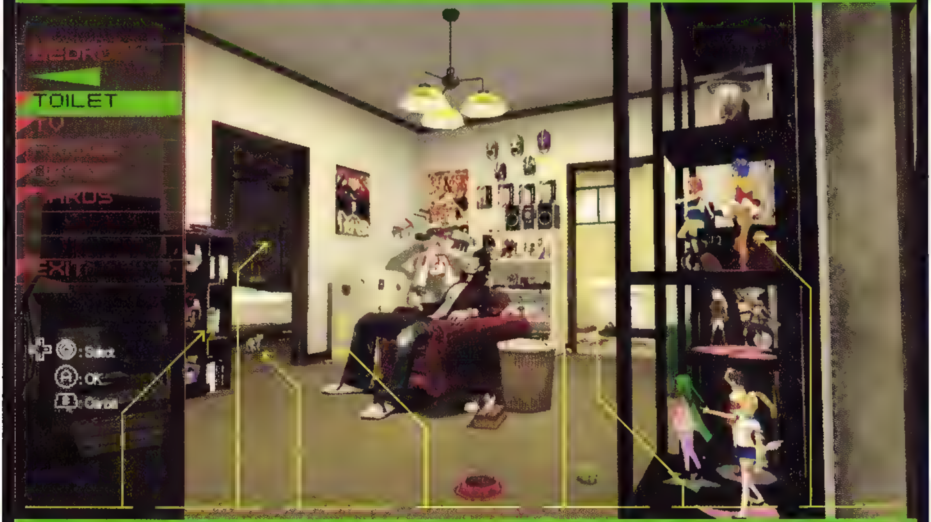

[illegible]

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D3PUBLISHER

When Travis has reached the end of an area, he will receive a phone call. The Wii remote will actually ring through its speaker, and then Sylvia—your contact at the association--will speak through it. If you hold the remote up to your ear like a phone (go on—don't worry about who's looking) the effect is supercool—like the game has broken through into real life. After some teasing from Sylvia ("Need to pop a breath mint? Use the restroom? Brush your teeth?"), Travis will always find two things: a bathroom to save the game in, and a note tucked into the mouth of a wrestling mask that was left for him by his former wrestling mentor. Reading the note unlocks a new throw.

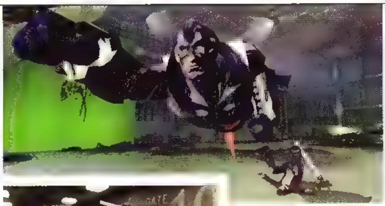
Finally, it's time for a ranked boss fight. The ranked assassins are each unique in fighting style, back story, and personality—and they're all 100% crazy. Think of the motley crews in Metal Gear Solid or the *Trigun* anime, only nuttier. A big part of the fun of No More Heroes is in seeing which insane whack-job the game will throw at you next. After an intense fight and a couple of story scenes, Travis is rewarded with a max health increase and then taken back to his motel room where he can save and start earning cash for the next match.

SPREAD THE WORD

No More Heroes is destined to become a cult classic, and quite possibly a huge hit. Not only is it one of the freshest and funniest games that we've played in a long time, but it's also one of the very few Wii titles targeted specifically at older players. While the version that we played was still in development and hadn't yet been completely polished, it was already plenty good enough to hook us right from the start and keep us glued until the very end.

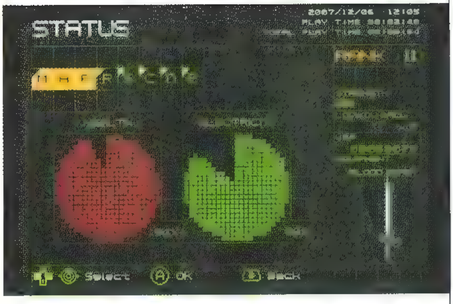
If you enjoy intense action—and can appreciate some good cheesy fun in your games—then help us spread the word about No More Heroes.

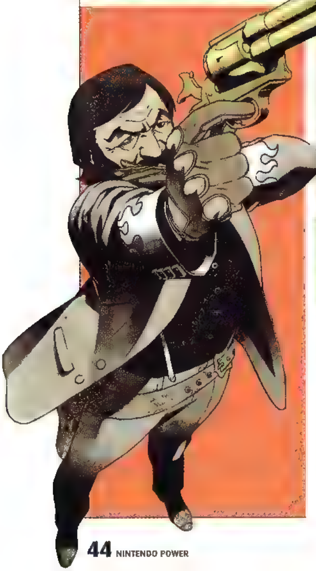
Projects this daring don't come along very often, and they deserve all the support they can get. (And besides, we want a sequel!)

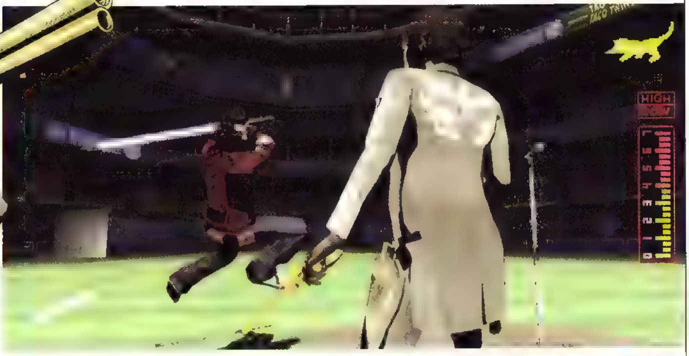


BEEF HEAD
VIDEO
DVD
GAME

[Left] When thugs attack with baseballs, there's only one way to defend yourself. [Top left] Travis takes on Destroyman, another ranked assassin. [Top right] Gotta love these names. [Bottom] The game has a very cool retro vibe to it.







BOSS BATTLE: DR. PEACE

The bosses are the nutty icing on No More Heroes' kooky cake. Take Dr. Peace, for example. He's ranked 9th, so he's the second boss that Travis takes on. He begins the fight by singing karaoke in the middle of a baseball stadium, then he starts firing away with his two pistols. And then, after you beat him...nah, we won't spoil that—you have to experience something this funny for yourself.

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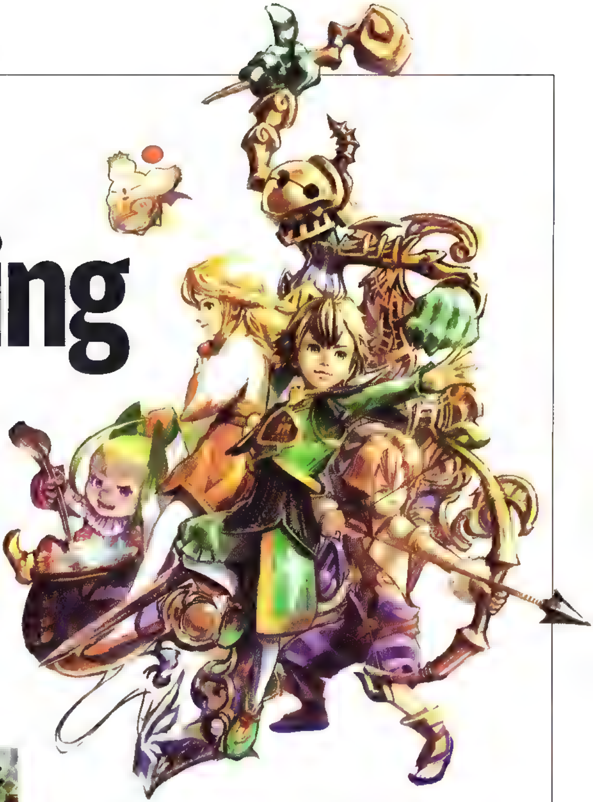
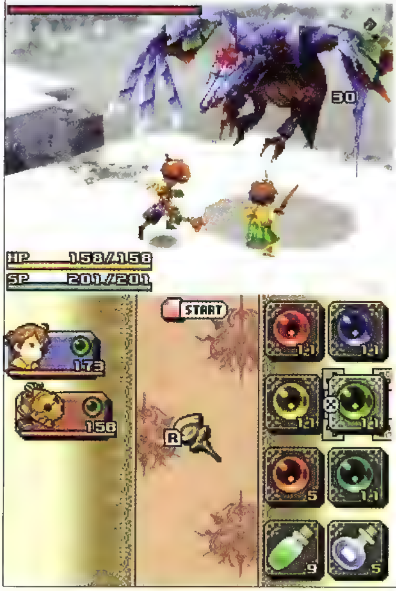
Tempting Fate

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates for DS is coming to North America in early 2008. Prepare yourself for this epic action-RPG with a glimpse at the title's gameplay and a behind-the-scenes look at its imaginative character designs.

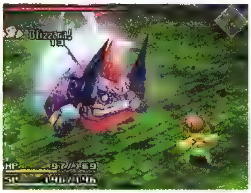
By Chris Hoffman



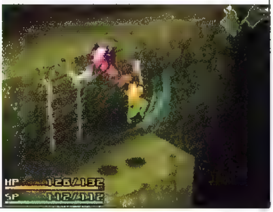


The DS is quickly becoming a must-have system for Final Fantasy fans. Final Fantasy III was one of 2006's best RPGs; the arrival of Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings is imminent; and in early 2008, players will thrill to the exploits of Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates. Building on the foundation laid by the original Crystal Chronicles on GameCube, Ring of Fates is an action-RPG take on the Final Fantasy mythos—a single- or multiplayer adventure full of magic, monsters, and sword-swinging mayhem.

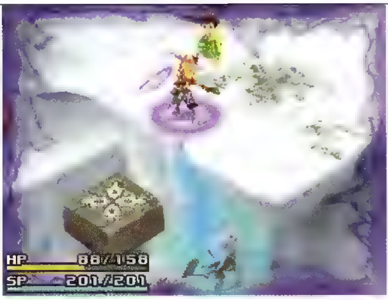
Even though Ring of Fates is on DS, the core gameplay remains fairly traditional. By moving with the Control Pad and attacking, jumping, and grabbing with the A, B, and Y buttons respectively, you'll be able to slice and dice your way through dungeons full of beasts and slay massive boss monsters. The DS's unique functionality comes into play when you use magic, items, and special skills. You'll find items (such as potions) and colored Magicite gems (which allow you to cast spells like Fire, Blizzard, and Cure) during your quest; you can ready the



Large, powerful bosses will test your sword-swinging skills, but luckily you'll have backup. In single-player mode you'll have AI-controlled partners; in multiplayer mode you'll rely on your friends.



Touch-screen-controlled special skills help you out in exploration and battle. Yukes (right) can draw magic from pillars to turn dashed lines into solid blocks, while Clavats (below) can dish out punishing melee damage.



HP 126/132
SP 112/112

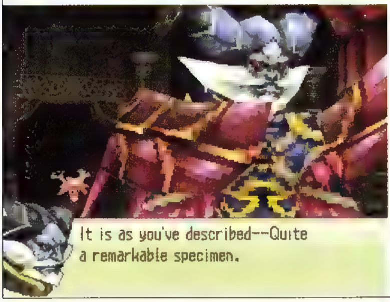
spell or item of your choice by touching it on the DS's lower screen, then activate it by pressing the X Button. Unlike in most Final Fantasy games, spells in Ring of Fates aren't just for attacking and healing—you must also use them to solve puzzles, such as opening doors or activating platforms. Additionally, you can "pile" spells atop one another to create stronger spells, including Gravity and Ultima.

Special skills are triggered when you press the R Button. Doing so causes the action to move from the top screen to the bottom, allowing you to tap the touch screen to use character-specific skills, such as dealing massive damage, concocting items, or drawing power from magic pillars to create platforms. As you play through the game's single-player mode, your main character, Yuri, will be joined by partner characters that you can switch to at any time by tapping their icon on the touch screen. Switching characters to best make use of their individual traits is essential to victory.

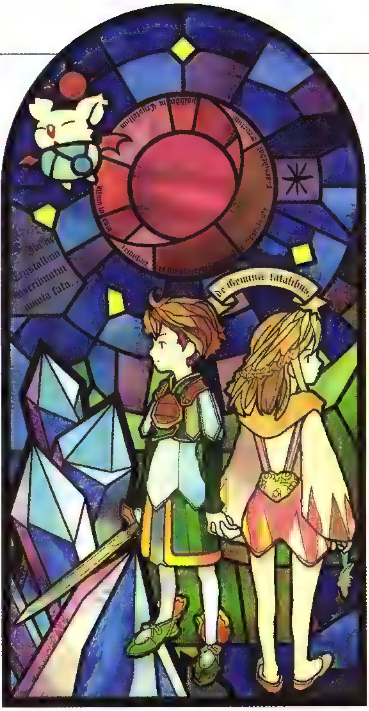
While some cumbersome elements of the original Crystal Chronicles have been removed—there's no more magic chalice to haul around—others remain intact. The four races (humanlike Clavats, pudgy Lilties, roguish Selkies, and lanky Yukes) still play prominent roles, and the game once again boasts distinct, mesmerizing character designs by Toshiyuki Itahana. Though the game's North American release is still a few months off, you can ease the wait with the following inside look at Ring of Fates's artistry.

Aach... Say, Meeth, dear...
It's getting awfully hot. Think you can turn down the heat a bit?

Crystals are a type of pure energy that generate power when properly activated. A vehicle catalytical.



Visually impressive story sequences help flesh out the game's plot in between battles. As you can probably tell by his gnarly facial hair and glowing red eyes, the fellow pictured to the left is one of the villains of the tale.



Crystal Craftsman

Toshiyuki Itahana has been synonymous with Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles since the series was introduced in 2004. His distinct artistic style set the playful tone of the game, and that sense of whimsy endures in Ring of Fates on DS. While Itahana is best known for his role as a character designer, he will be sitting in the director's chair for Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers for Wii, and will serve as art supervisor for the upcoming WiiWare Crystal Chronicles game. Itahana took a break from his game-making duties to discuss his character designs and the philosophies behind them.

Nintendo Power: How did you get your start as an artist?
Toshiyuki Itahana: I came into contact with pen-and-paper RPGs originating from North America and RPGs released for the PC when I was a student. They inspired me to imagine and draw my own game worlds and characters living in those worlds.

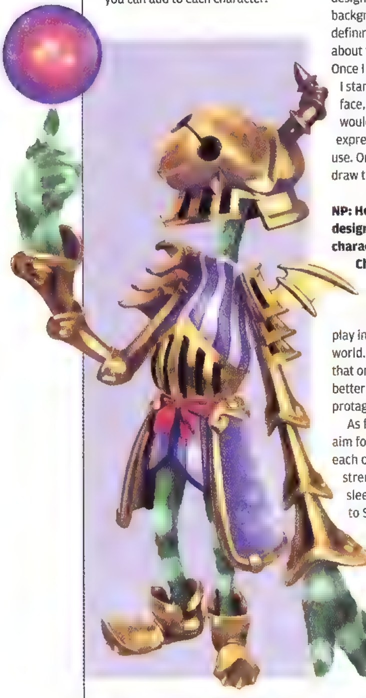
NP: How would you describe your art style?
TI: As objects in nature tend to change color and shape depending on lighting, weather, and many other outside factors, I try to create designs that still preserve the organic feel of hand-drawn pictures even when they're transposed into the 3D world.

NP: What attracts you to that particular style?
TI: I don't think I have a "particular" style, as I do try to adapt my art style to each project's goals and needs. That being said, I intend

to make some drastic changes in the way I draw in the near future—in such a way, I hope, that fans may be delightfully surprised.

NP: How do you feel that your style has evolved over the years?
TI: I've tried to focus on facial features and expressions more than costume designs in recent projects.

In the past, I tended to focus on creating iconic hairstyles and costumes, as those features were what gave game characters their individuality. Recently, however, I've leaned towards designing more natural hairstyles and costumes—more realistic designs that I could see adopting myself (though I admit that I'm too shy to try). This change in how I approach designs is a direct result of how much consoles have evolved over the years, and how much more detail you can add to each character.



Alhanalem (Yuke)
Known as Al for short, Alhanalem is a member of the birdlike Yuke tribe. He is something of a mentor to Yuri and Chelinka, and is very knowledgeable about magic and medical herbs. He has a rather unusual manner of speaking.

NP: Your designs often feature very intricate, almost Victorian-style clothing. What sort of research do you do when coming up with costumes, and what are some of your sources of inspiration?
TI: I'd say it's probably because I have this book called *The History of Western Art* that I've kept since junior high school permanently open on my desk when I draw.

I also draw inspiration from Western movies and also shows set in feudal/post-feudal Japan, among other things.

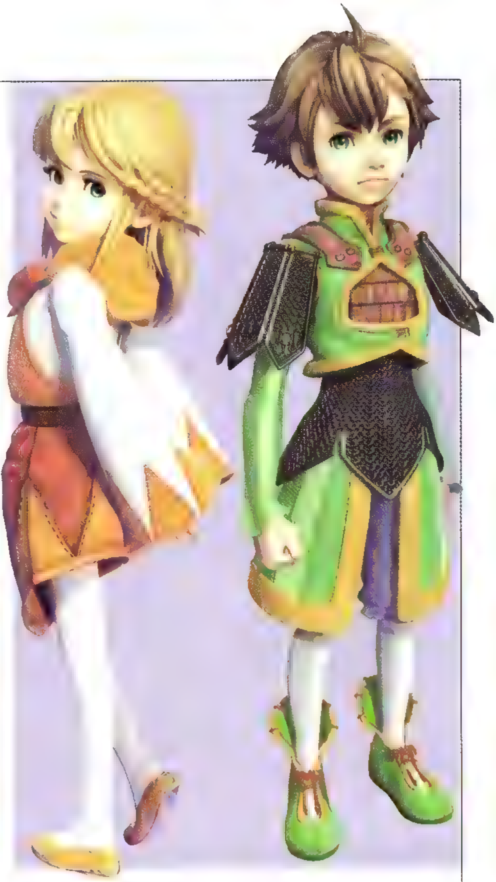
NP: Can you talk to us a little bit about the process for creating a character? How much do you know about a character's personality, abilities, etc. before designing him or her?
TI: I make sure to ask the game designers about each character's background, personality, and other defining features, but not so much about their in-game abilities or stats. Once I have all the information I need, I start by sketching a character's face, while imagining how he or she would talk and what type of facial expressions that character would use. Once I have a finalized version, I draw the rest of that character's body.

NP: How do you approach the designs for each of the different character races in the Crystal Chronicles universe?
TI: The four races in Crystal Chronicles are defined by the different and unique roles they play in your party and in the game world. As such, I try to make sure that one race's costume design is not better than the others, even between protagonists and random NPCs.

As for the actual costumes, I aim for designs that showcase each character and race's role and strengths, such as giving short-sleeved jackets and light armor to Selkies, which tells the player that this particular race relies on speed and agility to overcome their foes in combat. So in essence, the designs are focused on a character's class more than his or her personal taste.

For Ring of Fates, I've made sure that most of the costume and armor designs blend in with that title's particular world feel. However, I've also made several designs that are slightly over-the-top and some very unique designs for multiplayer mode. The designs for multiplayer were created to offer players a chance to customize their character in that setting.

NP: What's your approach to adapting classic Final Fantasy designs (moogles, White Mages, etc.)?
TI: Moogles and White Mages are visually iconic entities, so my philosophy when adapting them to these titles is to emphasize the parts that make them so unique. The moogles in the FFCC world, for example, are more than just cuddly little animals, and are actually very smart. At the same time, they're not as prolific as the main four races, so I make sure they stand apart from those civilizations, while still being more than just furry creatures. For example, I've made sure they don't walk with their feet on the ground too much, as it would make them seem too "normal" and on the same level as the main four races.



Chelinka (Clavat) and Yuri (Clavat)
Yuri and his twin sister Chelinka are the main characters of Ring of Fates. Raised by their father, Latov, the twins only recently became old enough to go on adventures of their own. Yuri is curious, energetic, and ready for action, while Chelinka possesses a unique magical power.

Gnash (Selkie)
Like other Selkies, Gnash is quick, agile, and usually dressed in animal hides. His keen senses are extremely beneficial to his companions, as are his skills with a bow. Gnash has the ability to double-jump, letting him reach places his allies cannot.

NP: Your designs seem to feature especially vibrant colors. What is your philosophy for the colors you choose, and how do colors enhance the character designs?
TI: I used to do a lot of magazine cover artwork and poster designs before I started working for the game industry. In those fields, the usage of color is both iconic and symbolic, meaning that they're used to convey specific messages, and incite specific reactions from the viewer. This experience helped me tremendously when 2-D sprites were the mainstay of game designs. You only had so many colors and so many pixels to convey certain messages to the player (blue bottles are restorative potions, red bottles are poisonous liquids, etc.).

With the improvements in game graphics nowadays, I've shifted to using these color schemes in character outfits to convey their personality traits, or even using unexpected color hues in places that need to stand out. In Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles on GameCube, colors were thematically used to distinguish each race. In Ring of Fates, on the other hand, I assigned a color theme to each character to convey their very distinct personalities. For example, cold colors like blue and green were used for Selkies in the GameCube game, but Gnash the Selkie in Ring of Fates has bright red hair, while Alhanalem the Yuke is depicted with dark hues of blue.

NP: What about your character designs in Ring of Fates separates them from the designs in other Crystal Chronicles games? Did you have to adapt your designs at all for Ring of Fates to account for the game being on a smaller screen?
TI: Most of the characters in the GameCube game had to be designed with more subtle hues for the sake of the predominant multiplayer feature. In Ring of Fates, however, each character, including the villains, has a strong and distinct personality, and the designs showcase that.

As for the graphic limitations of the Nintendo DS, I don't usually think about hardware specs when I create my original sketches and designs. When we shift to the 3-D modeling phase, we look at those designs and try to work out which features to emphasize and which to tone down in the actual model. This is how we were able to give a very stylized and unique look to each character's small 3-D models.

NP: What would you say is the most challenging part of character design? Is there any particular aspect of a character's design that you find yourself paying attention to more than another?
TI: There's really no objective way, numerically or otherwise, of determining whether a certain design is good or bad—it's very subjective. In the end, the most difficult part is creating something that the development team will like. And that's very important because you really have to like the characters that you'll be modeling, designing, or scripting events around for the next several months.

Even after all these years, though, it still comes down to inspiration for me. I can agonize for hours on one design and still not be satisfied with it, but sometimes it just clicks, and I can put out something in half an hour that I really like. And that's also what's most important for me and what I pay attention to the most—to create something that I like, no matter which character it is, and pour as much time and effort into making sure it's the best design I can create (even if deadlines are near!).

NP: Who is your favorite character in Ring of Fates, and which of your own character designs is your all-time favorite?
TI: My favorite character in Ring of Fates is Latov, the father of the twin brother and sister around which the main story revolves. He's hard-working and dependable, someone you can really look up to.

As for my favorite character of all time...that would be the heroine of my next project.

NP: As technology advances, there's been a trend towards more realistic-looking characters. We still love stylized designs such as those in Crystal Chronicles, however. What do you think such designs bring to a game that you wouldn't be able to get from photorealistic characters?
TI: I think that creating photorealistic characters and environments is something that North American creators are very, very good at. I do play those types of action or shooting games at home myself, and I enjoy them very much.

In my opinion, the one advantage stylized designs like the ones in Crystal Chronicles have is that they still leave some things about the characters up to the player's imagination. The epitome of that is literature, of course, where most things are left to the reader's imagination. I think that stylized designs that let the players fill in the gaps still have a lot of appeal.

NP: How do you feel that your career as an artist and character designer has prepared you to direct The Crystal Bearers?
TI: Although you can't create characters or world designs without design documents, after they are created, I can visually see what would happen at each location, and what each character would do, react, and say in those situations. I guess my strength is this very visual approach to game creation, which would also enable me to maintain a consistent world feel throughout the title. In the end, I would like to say that The Crystal Bearers is every bit as exciting as Ring of Fates, if not more! Thank you.

Meeth (Lilty)
Like Alhanalem, Meeth acts as a teacher to Yuri and Chelinka. An alchemy expert, she can create items in the heat of battle. Even though Meeth is short—a characteristic of the Lilty tribe—and can seem childlike at times, she is a full-fledged adult.

Funky Monkey

Get ready to shake it like never before! Sega brings back another beloved classic with Samba de Amigo for Wii.

By Steve Thomason

When the Wii remote was unveiled, the first thing that came to mind for most gamers was likely how awesome it would be to wield the controller as a sword or lightsaber. But for a certain segment of the gaming populace, thoughts immediately turned to dancing monkeys and the hypnotic beats of Ricky Martin—trademarks of Sega's indelible Samba de Amigo.

Among those who viewed the maracas-shaking classic as a perfect fit for the new console were folks at Texas-based Gearbox Software. "We just assumed that a Samba game for Wii was already in the works," says Gearbox executive producer and confessed Samba fanatic Marc Tardif. "When we heard that it wasn't, we wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. We pestered Sega so much that I think they let us do it just to make us shut up."

A Latin-themed rhythm game and a studio best known for World War II shooter Brothers in Arms may seem an odd pairing, but based on what we've seen thus far, there's little need for concern. "People tend to typecast a developer as a first-person shooter studio or whatever," opines Tardif. "At the end of the day, we're just game makers. We'll make any kind of game that we think is fun. And it's kind of difficult to imagine a game that's more fun than a dancing monkey with maracas."

Shake Your Groove Thing

When it comes to Samba's core mechanics, Gearbox subscribes to the adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." The game plays essentially the same on Wii as it did on Dreamcast and at the arcades. You shake the maracas—in this case represented by either the Wii remote and nunchuk or two Wii remotes—at varying heights as guided by onscreen cues, pausing occasionally to strike a pose. It's simple, addictive, and every bit as fun today as it was eight years ago. Few games can truly be considered timeless, but it seems unlikely that Samba will ever lose the ability to put a smile on your face. "We could have completely redesigned the game, but whenever you look at the forums or whatnot, people just want Samba de Amigo," says Tardif. "They want that experience on Wii. So that's what we're really trying to deliver. We're going to add some stuff to update it and make it a little bit fresh, but what they're getting is Samba de Amigo. And in our opinion, that's what they want. That's what we want."

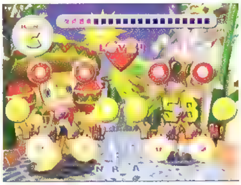
To recapture what made the original game so special, Gearbox realizes that nailing the controls is of the utmost importance. "That's been the number-one priority for the entire project; just getting the controls absolutely spot-on," remarks Tardif. "We're about 70% there. You'd think the Wii controllers would be perfectly suited to something like this, but it's been a pretty difficult problem to solve. It's taken a lot of effort to get the controls really good." The team has already devoted months to that challenge, gathering lots of data from playtesting sessions and conducting research on how best to utilize the Wii's technology. "Our programmers have even pulled up some crazy robotics papers for robotic arms, and looked at the algorithms they use to determine where they are in 3-D space," reveals producer Tom Mustaine.

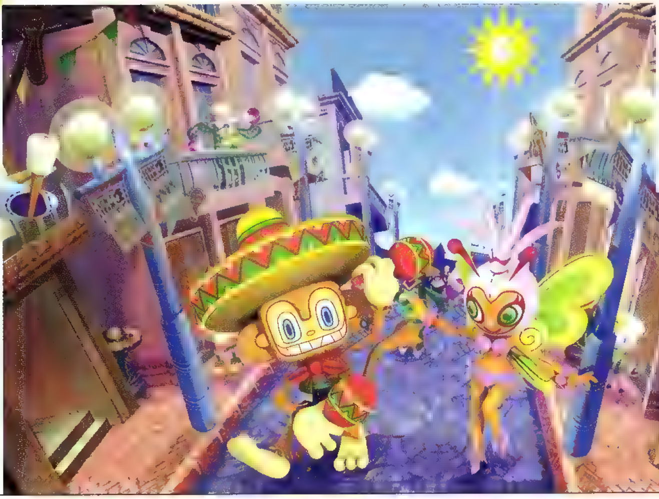
Though the team continues to fine-tune the controls (the game isn't due to ship until spring of next year), they're already far enough along that Mustaine and company can regularly score perfect runs (albeit in Easy mode). The game's overall feel has also earned an important endorsement. "When we finally put it in front of [original Samba director Shun] Nakamura-san and he said, 'The controls work,' we were like, 'Woohoo!'" says Mustaine. "That was a big moment."

One of the things that made the original game so memorable was that extra tactility provided by the maracas peripheral. Asked whether some sort of attachment might be made available for the Wii controller, Tardin replies that it's something they're still looking into. "You guys will be the first to hear about it," promises the executive producer. At the very least, the team intends to utilize the Wii remote's speaker and vibration functions to simulate the maracas.

Greatest Hits

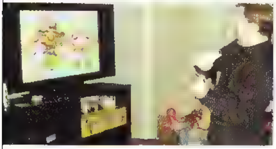
Of course, proper groove-thing shaking requires a suitable collection of spicy beats. The game's soundtrack will feature a mix of classic songs from the original Samba and Version 2000 (which was never released in the US), as well as an assortment of all-new tracks. "With the old songs, it's really just picking the ones that people think were the defining Samba songs from back in the day," says Tardif. "We're hoping to get a lot of people's favorites in there." For the new tracks, Gearbox president Randy Pitchford explains, "You have to look at the rhythm of the song and how that applies to the mechanic of Samba de Amigo. And then there are all of these subjective considerations, like how much does the song feel like it's in the spirit of Samba. Then you go try to chase down the license." The





The above screen is from the Dreamcast version of Samba de Amigo, while the left image represents what Gearbox is shooting for with the Wii game. Note the extra detail in the character models; Amigo finally has individual fingers!

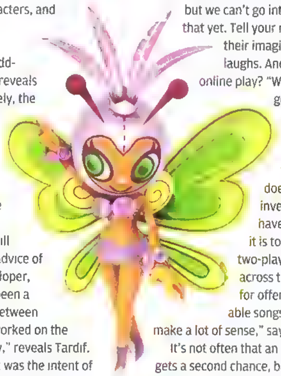
The Gearbox team gets their pose on. From left to right: producer Tom Mustaine, executive producers Stephen Palmer and Marc Tardif, lead programmer Shawn Green, and president Randy Pitchford.



overall list should weigh in at around 40 songs, evenly split between new and old. Sega and Gearbox aren't prepared to reveal the full lineup just yet, but they did confirm that "Macarena" and "Samba de Janeiro" will return from the original game, and that the new picks will include songs from Gipsy Kings and Carlos Santana.

In addition to certain tracks, another element from Version 2000 that will make its US debut in the Wii game is Hustle mode. This mode not only adds far more static poses to each song, it also introduces movement-based poses that require you to wave the controller in various patterns. "It's a really cool addition, and we're excited to finally give US gamers a chance to try it," enthuses Mustaine.

The Wii game will also include all of the stages, characters, and minigames from both of the previous titles. "Beyond that, we're adding lots of new stuff," reveals Mustaine. Unfortunately, the producer isn't ready to talk specifics, "But at the end of the day," he says, "it's got to feel like Samba." To make sure they're staying on the right track, Gearbox will frequently solicit the advice of Samba's original developer, SonicTeam. "There's been a lot of back and forth between us and the guys that worked on the project back in the day," reveals Tardif. "We'll ask them, 'What was the intent of such and such?' or 'How did this aspect work?' And we're constantly sending ideas over to them saying, 'Hey, we'd really like to implement this kind of feature into the game.' And we'll get feedback from them saying, 'Oh, that's really cool, but you should try doing it this way.' We have the utmost respect for that team. It's been an honor working with them."



That respect for the first game extends to the visual presentation. Gearbox is taking the original art assets and updating them with higher polygon counts, real-time lighting, and other graphical enhancements to make the game look significantly better than its Dreamcast counterpart while retaining its considerable charm. After all, the vibrant colors and insane hijinx of sombrero-wearing monkey Amigo and friends made the first game almost as fun for bystanders as it was for players.

With development still in the early stages, the team is examining how best to take advantage of various other opportunities afforded by the Wii. "There's a huge spectrum of stuff that we want to do with Miis, but we can't go into detail about that yet. Tell your readers to use their imagination," Tardif laughs. And what about online play? "We want to play a good Wi-Fi game on Wii," insists Pitchford. "We just have to see what the market does to balance that investment. We also have to see how hard it is to simulate the two-player local game across the network." As for offering downloadable songs, "That would make a lot of sense," says Tardif.

It's not often that an overlooked gem gets a second chance, but with the popularity of music games at an all-time high, Gearbox hopes more gamers will finally discover what makes Samba de Amigo one of the best in the genre. "Our dream is that everybody sees what we saw in the Dreamcast game," says Pitchford. "We want to bring that to a larger audience."

Founding Amigo

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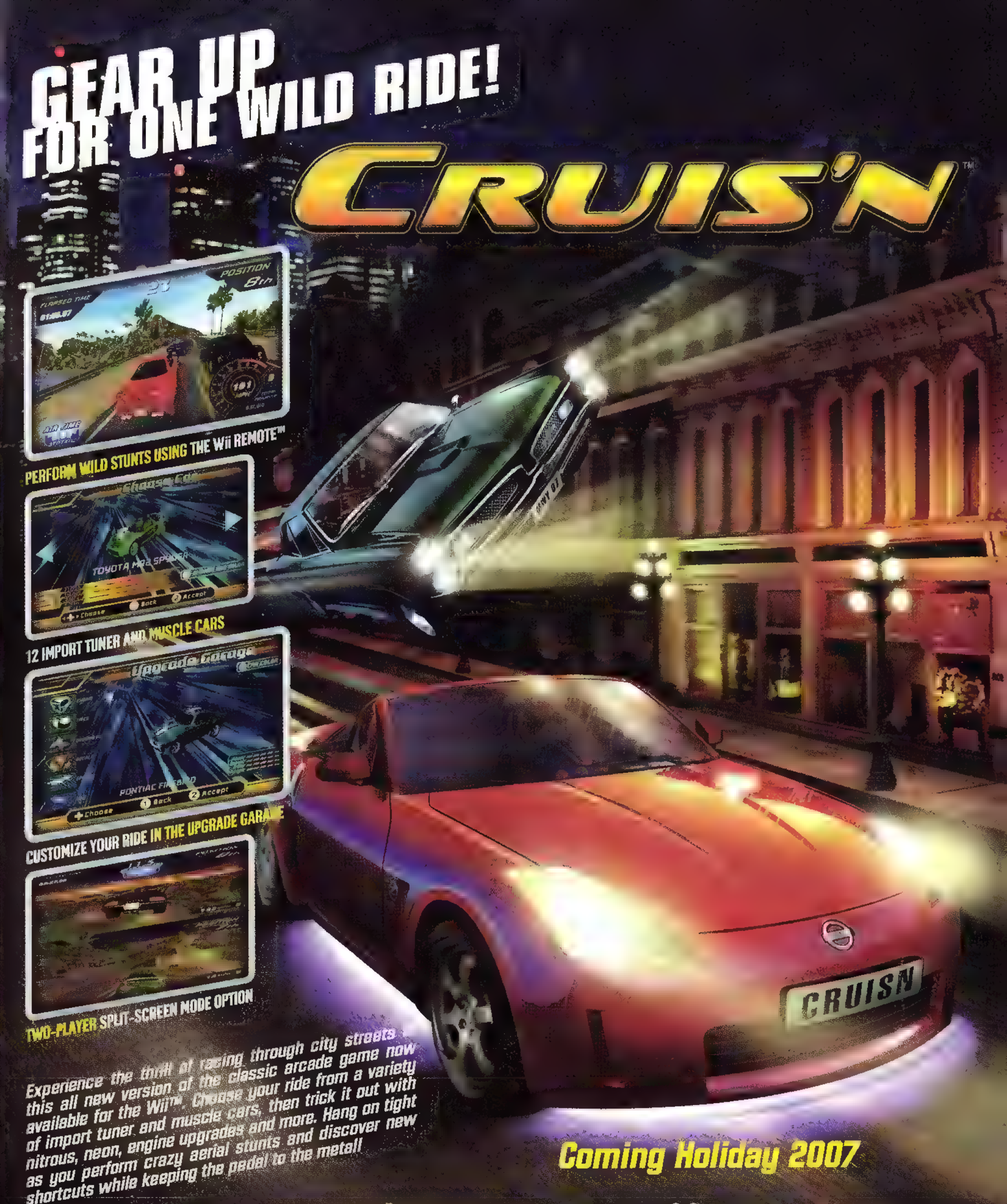
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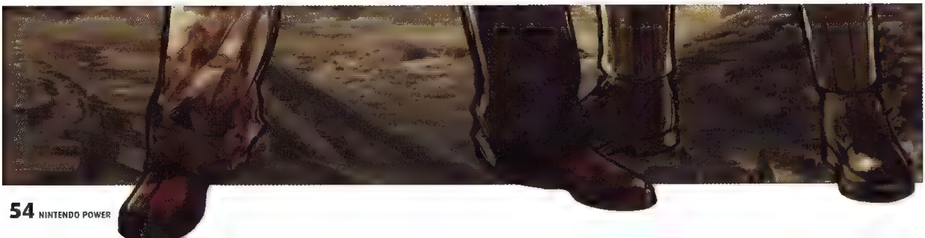
The Path to Ruin

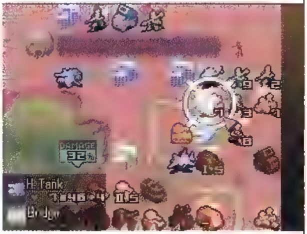
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin has appeared on the horizon—don't get left behind.

By Chris Shepperd



The Advance Wars series has always been known for its glib, lighthearted look at modern warfare—something that a lot of gamers have seen as ironic (and kind of unsettling) considering the subject matter. Days of Ruin for DS tosses out the previous Advance Wars stories in favor of a new scenario that is bleak and serious, consequentially making the gameplay feel more momentous.

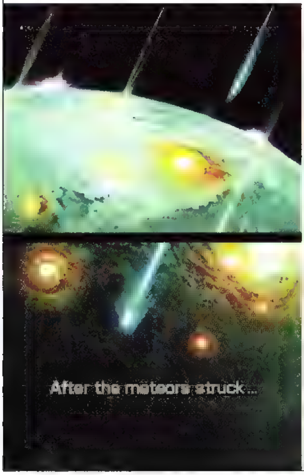
Dust covers the earth, blotting out all traces of sunlight...



The story begins shortly after an apocalyptic disaster—meteor strikes have caused floods, earthquakes, and mass fires all over the planet, wiping out most of the population and leaving much of the world uninhabitable. The people had already been enduring constant struggles of a war between the nations of Rubinelle and Lazuria—now the survivors must find a way to live wondering where their next meal will be. To make matters worse, villainous warlords have taken advantage of the situation, looking to grab more than their fair share of the remaining rations. You'll learn virtually everything from conversations between key characters, which creates an intimate sense of danger and despair.

Most of the plot revolves around Will, a young cadet from the Rubinelle Military Academy. As Will tells it, he was trapped in the mess hall of the academy for days after the meteors hit, living on canned bread while digging his way out through piles of rubble and bodies. Shortly after freeing himself, he encounters a roving band of outlaws, but is saved just in time by Captain Brenner of the Rubinelle army, along with 1st Lieutenant Lin. There's no army left to speak of, but Brenner and Lin still bear some allegiance to the concept.

In the post-apocalyptic world, Brenner desires only to rescue as many people as he can, a cause that Will readily picks up as his own. Many external factors shape this simple goal, and Will and Brenner often face difficult decisions that can mean life or death for them and many others. In their search, they'll join people sympathetic to their cause and meet many more on the battlefield who are driven by greed and a lust for power.



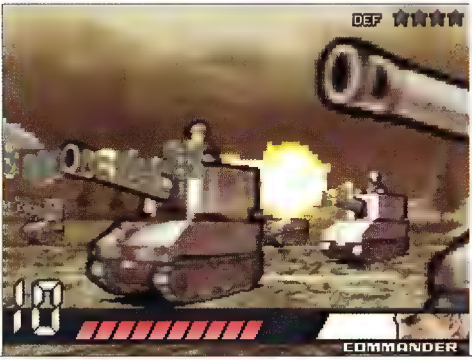
After the meteors struck...

Struggle for Survival

The story plays out through 26 main missions, with substantial story scenes that tie the plot together occurring between and during the skirmishes. In addition, around 30 "training" missions unlock as you complete levels. These missions will push your strategic skills to the limit; they're entirely optional, and you can go back and play them any time you like.

Although any remnants of previous Advance Wars stories were scrapped for Days of Ruin, most of the gameplay fundamentals remain intact. You and your opponent take turns directing your army around a gridded battlefield and engaging in conflicts. Your objective is to either claim your opponent's home base or wipe out his troops completely. To do so, you have a wide range of units at your disposal, including various forms of infantry, tanks, aircraft, and ships. During combat, you can get a better look at the battlefield by pressing the R Button to zoom in on a particular area. All of the units have unique capabilities—infantry units can capture cities (which increases your available funds to buy new equipment) and aircraft can cross large bodies of water, for example. You can move the troops either via the touch screen and stylus or via the Control Pad. A lot of people were frustrated by how the touch screen worked in the first DS Advance Wars game; the developers were obviously taking notes, as the method feels more intuitive than before.

If you're a veteran of the Advance Wars series,



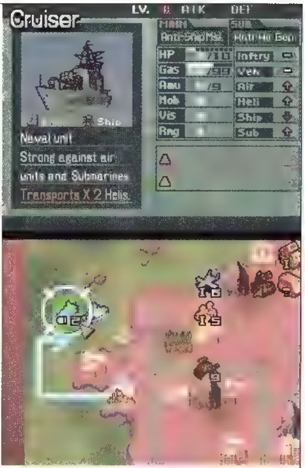
War is no longer as cute as it once was. Days of Ruin sports a grittier and slightly less-exaggerated art style than its predecessors.

you'll recognize many of the units, but there are several notable additions. The new bike infantry unit moves quickly and can capture cities and factories, but it doesn't have the firepower of a larger vehicle. There's also a new tank unit called the flare—with it, you can lob a bright light at enemies that are concealed by the fog of war, revealing them long enough for you to attack. The flare can give you plenty of tactical information, but as a combat piece it doesn't pack the punch of a regular tank. A new airplane called a duster fills a much-needed strategic void—the modified crop duster can attack any kind of aircraft or land unit. The duster won't make up for more-powerful fighter planes and tanks, but its versatility makes it a powerful tool on the battlefield. Other new units include mobile cannons, and ships that mesh smartly with the existing units. But you won't have everything available to you at once—as you progress through stages, you'll be introduced to more and more weaponry, allowing you to get acquainted with each new piece before adding another layer of complexity.

Pretty much every army has the same types of units—you won't come across a foe with an especially potent bomber, for example (you'll have to deal with unbalanced forces within a battle occasionally, however). But individual units can get stronger while they're on the battlefield—for every enemy unit that one of your units destroys, the destroying unit will go up in rank, giving it better strength and defense. So, for example, if a bazooka-carrying mech infantry unit crushes a recon unit, it will gain a rank, as represented by a 1 next to it. A unit can strengthen itself up to three times, at which point it will earn a Veteran ranking and become a force to be reckoned with. In the right situations, a fully powered-up infantry unit can be more than enough to take down a tank. You can see the ranks of your opponent's units, too, so you won't run into battle just to get wiped out by some hardened veterans much stronger than you.

You can also boost your troop strength based on the commanding officer (CO) in charge of the forces. If you've played Advance Wars: Dual Strike, you'll remember CO Powers—devastating attacks that a CO could unleash on the entire battlefield at key moments. They're back in Days of Ruin, and although they still affect the entire battlefield, they can't turn the tide of battle as significantly as they did before. The CO rides with any unit of your choice. He can't be killed while with a unit, and the unit automatically gets a Veteran rank when escorting a CO; if the unit gets defeated, the CO simply returns to base. As the CO's unit destroys enemy troops, the CO's gauge will fill; when it's full, he can let loose his CO Power. The CO Power is different for every commander—one might replenish fuel and ammo for all your troops, whereas another might reduce the range of your opponent's weapons. But COs affect gameplay with more than just their CO Powers—while they're on the field, they can make nearby vehicles more powerful. These influences, called CO Zones, are also particular to the commander—a CO Zone might increase the units' defense or extend their visual range, for example.

Days of Ruin rewards smart, tactical play—you won't win by simply putting your CO in the biggest tank and laying waste to a whole army. Now that CO Powers are balanced better so as not to swing the battle too far in favor of one side or the other, thoughtful decision-making pays off more than ever. And when a mission is over, you can see how well your tactics paid off—scores for your speed, power, and technique are combined to give you an overall grade. If you didn't do as well as you'd hoped, you can replay a mission as many times as you want.

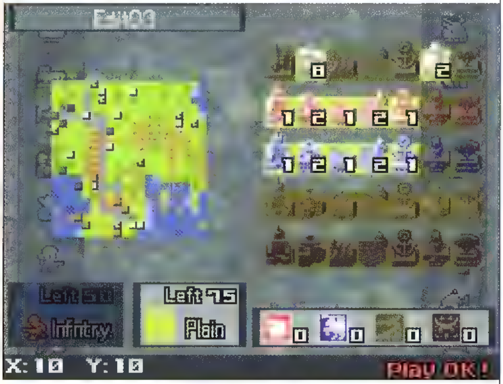


Naval unit
Strong against air units and Submarines
Transports X 2 Helis

DEF
LV. I
3
COMMANDER
DEF
LV. ACE
10
COMMANDER

Up to the Challenge

In addition to the extensive single-player campaign, Days of Ruin offers multiplayer options that are virtually unrivaled in handheld gaming. The simplest form of playing with your friends is via single-card DS play—you choose a campaign and determine who's on what team, and then you pass



The robust battlefield editor and ability to trade maps over the Wi-Fi Connection should provide a neverending supply of fresh challenges.

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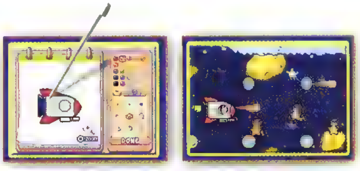
Drawn to Life™

Draw your own Hero, and then fly, swim and smash through exciting worlds!



Design vehicles, weapons, tools and more to assist you on your quest!

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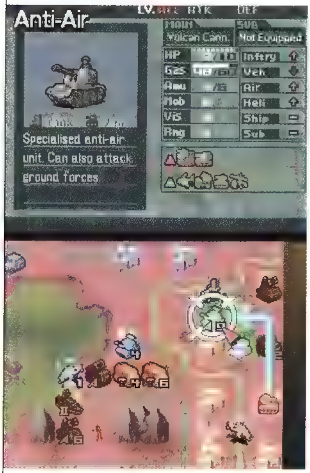
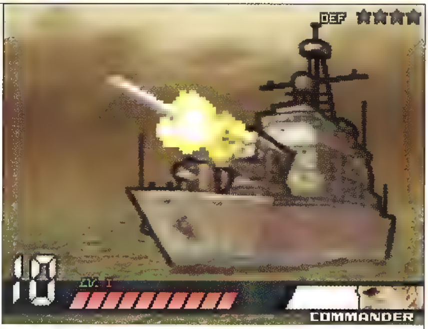
the DS from commander to commander. As with the single-player campaign, you get the powers of the CO you choose. If you have multiple DS systems that each have their own game card, you have more options—you can play via local wireless or over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection with up to three friends. Local wireless battles are pretty straightforward—join up with nearby friends and go to battle. You can participate in battles via Wi-Fi Connection in two ways—either connect to a stranger or join up with a pal via a friend code. With the former, you can let the game match you with someone of comparable skill to yours (based on how you've performed in previous battles), or you can match up with a random stranger and start playing. If you use a friend code, however, you get the added ability to chat over the course of battle—the microphone is always on (if you want it to be), so you can trash-talk your foe to your heart's content.



Specialised anti-air unit. Can also attack ground forces



Victory often depends on effectively balan[illegible] your [illegible] land, sea, and air.

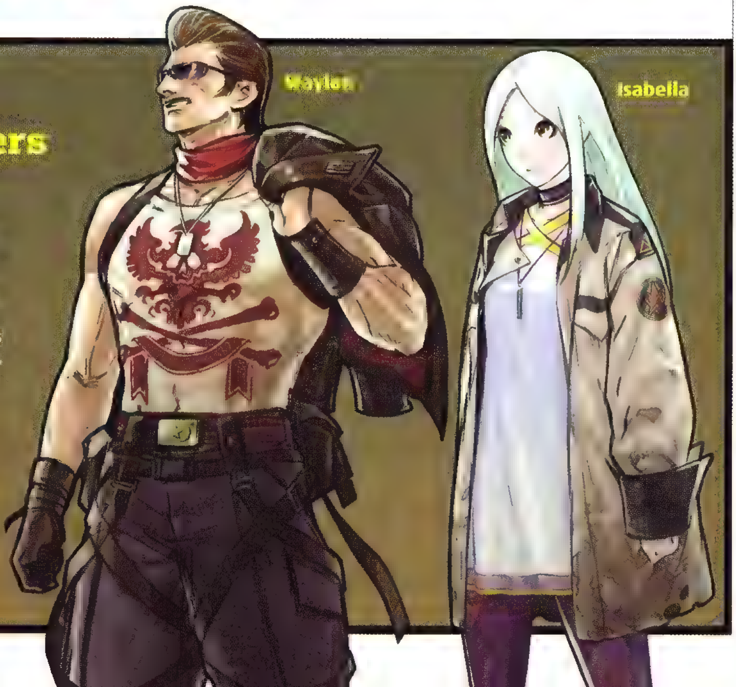
Well over 150 premade campaigns are available for use in virtually every multiplayer mode, including maps for two-player, three-player, and four-player battles. But you can also design and save your own campaigns, including terrain and troop placement, with a powerful map editor. Tweak bridge positioning, choose starting infantry placements, and decide whether to use the fog of war. Once you have your campaign built just right, you can send it to a friend via local wireless or Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, letting you play homemade maps against anyone in the world. Even more, you can upload a campaign to a server where people can download it and try it out, then rank its quality; then people can choose to download a random map or choose one based on all the posted maps' approval ratings.

Advance Wars is set to hit shelves in January 2008—that gives you just enough time to get your canned goods, flashlights, and (Wi-Fi enabled) shelter in good order.

ADVANCE WARRIORS

Cast of Characters

The post-apocalyptic framework for Days of Ruin opens up the range of characters. From Isabella, an amsnesiac who seems to only remember sensitive miliatry details, to Waylon, a hot-shot flyboy who suddenly finds himself without any allies, Days of Ruin is filled with quirky and original roles. And don't be too hasty in trying to separate the good guys from the bad—the people roaming the land will align themeselves with anyone who can provide their next meal.



Jim liked Sara. Sara liked Jim. Jim was saying all the right things and if he kept it up, it was turning out to be one ______________ night indeed.

lucky

promising

darn good

AUSPICIOUS

My Word Coach is the fun new game that improves your vocabulary. And when you have a larger vocabulary, you have a better chance of getting what you want. Knowing the right word makes all the difference.

My Word Coach
Wii
My Word Coach

Also Available:

Learn a New Language!

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EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

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NINTENDO DS. Wii. UBISOFT

Sonic and friends serve up arcade-style sports action on both the Wii and DS in **Sega Superstars Tennis**

By Chris Slate

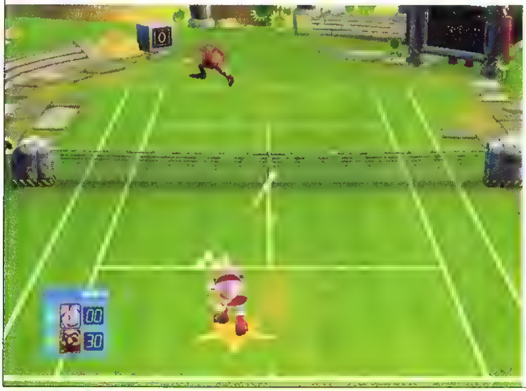
Sega, Love

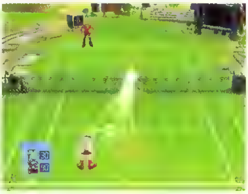
Mario's penchant for starring in sports games and teaming up with his company's other classic characters must have rubbed off on Sonic at the Olympic Games. The Blue Blur—plus 15 other Sega superstars—will take to the court early this spring in Sega Superstars Tennis.

Not only is this the first time that such a wide variety of Sega favorites has appeared together, but it's also the first time in years that we've seen many of these characters (why haven't you returned any of my calls, Ulala?). Being big Sega fans, we had to storm the company's San Francisco offices to see a Sonic serve with our own eyes.

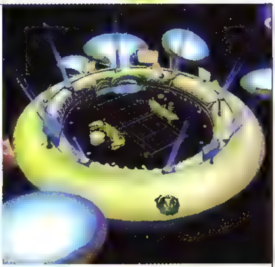
First off, you want to know which characters are in this game, right? We wish we knew the full list, but we can confirm six: from the Sonic series we've got Amy Rose, Dr. Eggman, and the blue hedgehog himself; then there's Amigo (as in "Samba de"), Ulala (Space Channel 5), and AiAi (Super Monkey Ball). That leaves 10 more to be revealed between now and the game's launch next spring. Who's next? Virtua Fighter characters? Shinobi? Alex Kidd? The car from OutRun? (Hey, it fought in Fighting Vipers, so you never know!) Sega has told us that additional characters will make cameos in the crowd and as line judges. Like in Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, competitors are classified by their strongest attribute. For example, Sonic is a speed type and Ulala is strongest in technique. Everyone also has special animations: we saw Sonic rolling to catch up to a wide shot, and spotted Ulala hitting the ball between her legs.

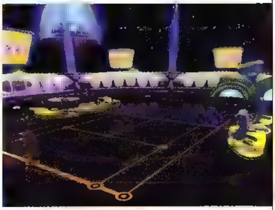
So, aside from the characters, what's different about the Superstars brand of tennis? The main addition is that each character comes with a unique Superstar Power, a tide-turning power-up that charges during the match until it's ready to be unleashed. Sonic, for instance, becomes Super Sonic, whose more-powerful hits can stun his opponent. Ulala gets her groove on and forces her victims to dance along, which slows their reaction time. The courts are another big feature—each is styled after a key location from a classic Sega game. We



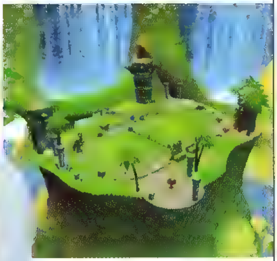


The Wii version of the game plays a lot like Wii Sports Tennis, although you can add the nunchuk to take full control.





There will be 10-20 courts in the game, each patterned after a classic Sega franchise like Space Channel 5 (above) and Sonic (below).

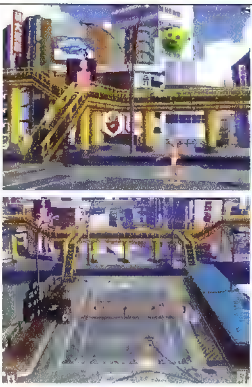


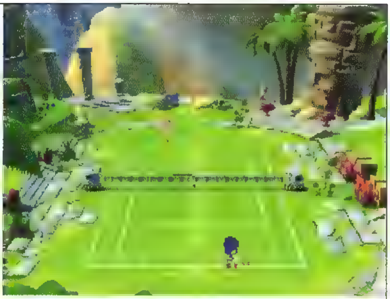
spotted Sonic's Green Hill Zone, plus areas inspired by Space Channel 5 and Samba de Amigo. Each is accompanied by music from the game it represents (after one particularly long match, we couldn't get that catchy Samba music out of our heads for hours). According to Sega, the final game should contain 10-12 courts.

Sega Superstars Tennis is being built on Sega's top-notch Virtua Tennis engine, so fans of the popular series will feel right at home. In the DS game, the A Button slices the ball, B adds top spin, a quick tap of B then A performs a lob, and a tap of A then B results in a drop shot. The controls of the Wii version are the same as in Wii Sports Tennis deliver forehands and backhands by simply swinging the Wii remote. The difference is that the nunchuk can be used to take full control of the character's movement—but novice players can still choose to auto-run by sticking with just the remote.

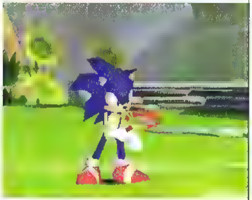
The features and modes of the Wii game are nearly identical to those of the DS version (which you're seeing here for the first time anywhere). There's Exhibition mode for multiplayer action, Tournament mode for long-term play—in which you work through many matches, unlocking new courts and characters as you go—and Ball Games mode, which offers popular minigames from Virtua Tennis 3 mixed in with some all-new ones. And modes aren't the only thing that the two versions share. The developers at Sumo Digital (who handled versions of OutRun 2006 and Virtua Tennis for Sega) have even found a way to take the courts from the Wii version and port them pixel-for-pixel to the DS. The multiplayer offerings are also similar on the two platforms: the DS supports wireless multiplayer and single-card game sharing, while the Wii version includes both singles play, and doubles play for up to four players.

It's always fun to see a "dream matchup" game like this, and Sega is one of the few publishers that has enough classic characters to pull it off. Like Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, Sega Superstars Tennis has the opportunity to appeal to both hardcore gamers and casual Wii Sports players. We've got a few months to wait for the final product—keep checking your trusty ol' Nintendo Power for info on new characters and other updates.





These first-ever DS screens are from an early work-in-progress version of the game, but still look quite nice. And...is that a Jet Set Radio stage we see in the screens to the left? Sega won't say, but it looks like it to us!



SAMBA DE SUPERSTAR

Crazy Courts

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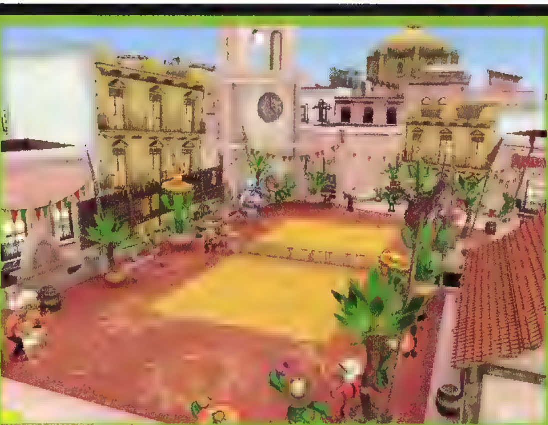
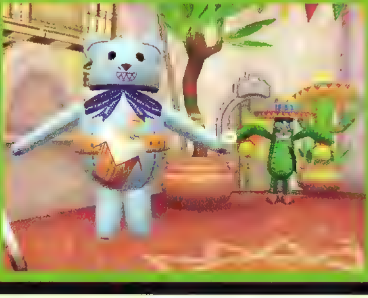
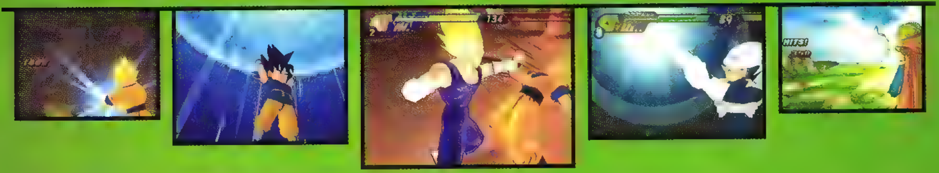




Introducing, among other things, some people you haven't had a chance to punch in the face yet.



DRAGON BALL Z
BUDOKAI
TENKAICHI
3

This may be the [illegible] DBZ game [illegible] of them all. There are [illegible] 150 playable characters. [illegible] play with Wii. And there's Disc Fusion on the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system, [illegible] Budokai games [illegible] New [illegible] Whatever [illegible] you have, find a friend who has the [illegible] Share the fight.

Wii

FUNIMATION ENTERTAINMENT

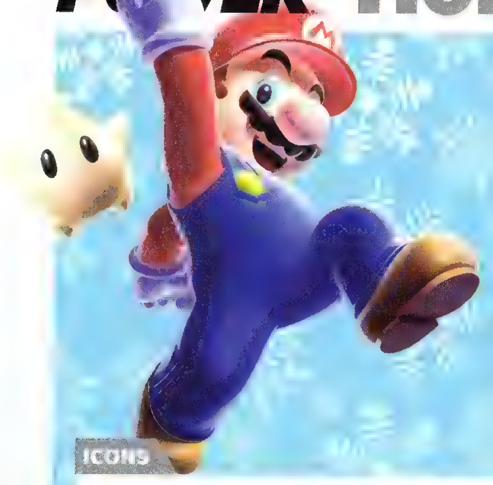
PlayStation 2

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Cartoon Violence
Mild Language

NINTENDO POWER

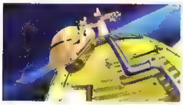
Holiday Buyers'



Love video games? Sure, we all do. But sometimes it's difficult to know which games are best. That's where your friends at Nintendo Power come in. Using this handy guide, you can ensure that you and yours have a happy holiday season. It's the right thing to do, and the right way to do it.

RESET
EJECT
Wii

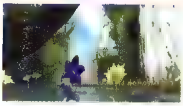
ICONS



Super Mario Galaxy

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
ESRB: EVERYONE

Platformers don't get any better than Super Mario Galaxy. It looks amazing and the levels are overflowing with creativity.



Sonic and the Secret Rings

PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SONICTEAM
ESRB: EVERYONE

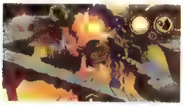
Sonic's Wii debut emphasizes what made us fall in love with the blue blur in the first place: running through imaginative levels at breakneck speeds.

Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games

PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA
ESRB: EVERYONE

It's the match-up the video game world has been waiting for. The medium's greatest icons face off in more than 20 broadly accessible events.

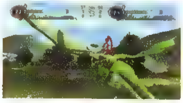
THINKING MAN'S ADVENTURES



Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
ESRB: EVERYONE

Every level in Zack & Wiki offers brilliant brain-busting puzzles. You'll never encounter the same situation twice, and the controls are almost as varied.



Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMSS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

The turn-based strategy epic boasts great writing, compelling characters, and impressive tactical depth. Be sure to set aside a few weeks for this one.

Super Paper Mario

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
ESRB: EVERYONE

The platforming/RPG Paper Mario series has always been great, but the ability to shift between 2-D and 3-D gameplay makes this game nothing short of genius.

Guide 2007 for Wii

PICK UP & PLAY

WarioWare: Smooth Moves

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
DEVELOPER **Nintendo**
ESRB: **Everyone 10+**

There are lots of minigame collections on Wii, but WarioWare is one of the best. Its variety makes it a riot to play, especially with friends.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock

PUBLISHER: **Activision**
DEVELOPER **Neversoft**
ESRB: **Teen**

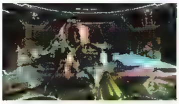
The massively popular franchise may be in the hands of a new developer, but shredding that plastic guitar still makes you feel like a rock star.

Cooking Mama: Cook Off

PUBLISHER: **Majesco**
DEVELOPER: **Office Create**
ESRB: **Everyone**

Anyone can be a master chef with Cooking Mama. Its food-themed minigames are a lot of fun, and you don't have to worry about doing the dishes afterward.

SHOOT TO THRILL



Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

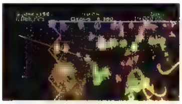
PUBLISHER. **Nintendo**
DEVELOPER· **Retro Studios**
ESRB: **Teen**

The conclusion to the critically acclaimed Metroid Prime trilogy looks stunning and demonstrates just how great an FPS can feel on Wii.

Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles

PUBLISHER **Capcom**
DEVELOPER· **Capcom**
ESRB· **Mature**

This light-gun shooter fills in the gaps of the Resident Evil saga, making it a must-play for hardcore fans of the series.

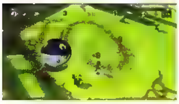


Geometry Wars: Galaxies

PUBLISHER: **Sierra**
DEVELOPER: **Kuju**
ESRB· **Everyone**

Originally a smash hit on Xbox Live Arcade, old-school shoot-'em-up Geometry Wars lands on Wii with gesture controls and loads of new content.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT



Mario Strikers Charged

PUBLISHER. **Nintendo**
DEVELOPER: **Next Level Games**
ESRB· **Everyone**

Mario and company return to the pitch with this online-enabled, over-the-top soccer game that feels more like structured combat than sport.

Madden NFL 08

PUBLISHER. **Electronic Arts**
DEVELOPER **EA Tiburon**
ESRB· **Everyone**

The highlight of Madden's sophomore season on Wii is online play without the need for Friend Codes. Plus, you know, it's Madden.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08

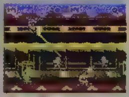
PUBLISHER· **Electronic Arts**
DEVELOPER. **EA Salt Lake**
ESRB· **Everyone**

Links addicts in need of something to get them through the cold winter months should look no further than Tiger Woods' latest Wii outing.

VIRTUAL CONSOLE PICKS

ActRaiser
(800 pts, SNES)

Gate of Thunder
(800 pts, Turbo CD)



[illegible]
(800 pts, Genesis)

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time
(1,000 pts, N64)

Ninja Gaiden
(500 pts, NES)

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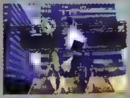

Sin & Punishment
(1,200 pts, N64)

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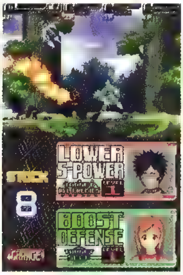
Holiday Buyers'

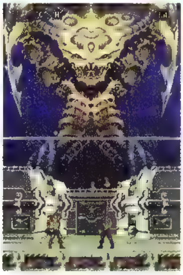
RETRO CHIC



Bleach: The Blade of Fate

PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: TREASURE
ESRB: TEEN

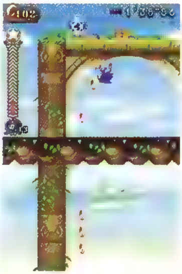
Leave it to the masters at Treasure to craft a responsive, precise 2-D fighting game that mixes an old-school mentality with DS functionality.



Contra 4

PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD
ESRB: TEEN

This DS tour-de-force lives up to Contra's storied legacy of delivering some of the best pure action in all of gaming. Just be prepared for a stiff challenge.

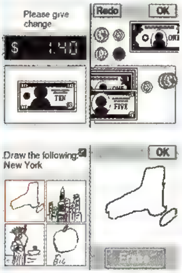


Sonic Rush Adventure

PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SONICTEAM/DIMPS
ESRB: EVERYONE

Sonic's latest adventure combines top-notch platforming with fun sea-faring diversions. Next up for the hedgehog: a DS RPG.

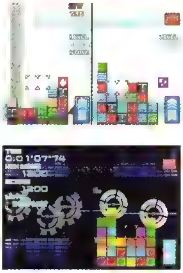
HEAVY MENTAL



Brain Age 2: More Training in Minutes a Day

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
ESRB: EVERYONE

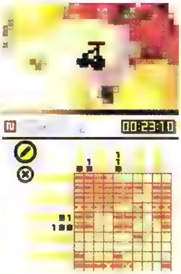
Other games may be "fun" or "entertaining," but how many can help you stave off dementia? Get to training, or it's off to the loony bin with you!



Planet Puzzle League

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
ESRB: EVERYONE

One of the most popular puzzle games around is back. Match up colored blocks to create massive combos and crush the competition online.



Picross DS

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: JUPITER
ESRB: EVERYONE

Using numeric clues to create simple pictures can get pretty addictive. Think of it as sudoku, but with pictures instead of a jumble of numbers.

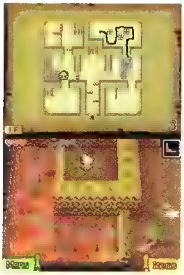
ACCESSORY ESSENTIALS

Wii Zapper
The Zapper gives light-gun games t "oomph" and comes included with Link's Crossbow Training.

Wii Points Card
Quite possibly the perfect gift for anyone who owns a Wii.

Guide 2007 for DS

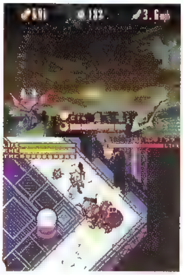
FANTASTIC JOURNEYS



The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

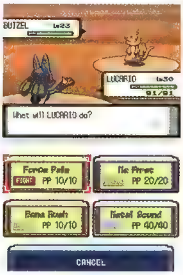
Phantom Hourglass takes everything you love about the Zelda series and gives it a touch-screen twist. It's fantasy adventure like you've never experienced.



Lunar Knights

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

The studio behind Metal Gear Solid brings us an action-RPG with superb production values and a gratifying mix of sword- and gunplay.

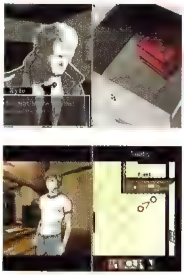

BUIZEL
LUCARIO
What will LUCARIO do?
Force Palm
PP 10/10
Ice Punch
PP 20/20
Bone Rush
PP 10/10
Metal Sound
PP 40/40
CANCEL

Pokémon Diamond & Pearl

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **GAME FREAK**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

There's no stopping the popularity of Pokémon. The latest versions feature more than 100 new critters to train, and you can even fight and trade them online.

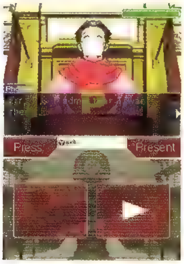
STORY TELLERS



Hotel Dusk: Room 215

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CINGS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

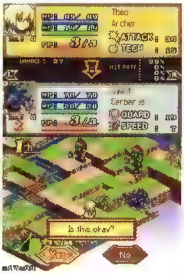
A sketchbook art style and intriguing characters highlight this interactive mystery. You'll have to sleuth around for clues to find out the hotel's secrets.


Press
Present

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials & Tribulations

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Think court is boring? Not when you're an Ace Attorney! Phoenix takes on some of his most intriguing cases yet in this humorous courtroom drama.


ATTACK
TECH
GUARD
SPEED
Is this okay?
Yes
No

Luminous Arc

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **IMAGE EPOCH**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Excellent turn-based strategy-RPG gameplay is made even better thanks to a likable cast of characters and a deep, thought-provoking storyline.

Wii Classic Controller
See all those cool Virtual Console games on the previous spread? This is how you play them.

Wi-Fi USB Connector
If you don't have a wireless router, this is the best way to get online.

MARIO KART
POWER

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NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
Holiday 2007

GRAND PRIZE

1 WINNER!

Party here. Party there. You can play Mario Party DS anywhere if you win our party pack, which includes a Nintendo DS Lite and four Mario Party DS game cards for you and your party people.

SECOND PRIZE

20 WINNERS!

We cordially invite 20 winners to join in the fun with their own Mario Party DS game cards.

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v223
c/o Future US
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than January 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about, January 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"). 4000 Shoreline Court, South San Francisco, CA 94080). Future US, Inc. cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for one (1) contestant is a Nintendo DS (of which the MSRP value is $129.99), and four retail copies of the Mario Party DS® Nintendo DS software (of which the actual retail value is $34.99). The prize that is available for twenty (20) contestants is a retail copy of the Mario Party DS® Nintendo DS software (of which the actual retail value for each is $34.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

9. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Void in Vermont, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico and where prohibited by law.

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11. A contestant may enter by printing your name, address, day-time telephone number and e-mail address (if you have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3 x 5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v223, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Only one entry per erson will be accepted

E 10+
ESRB

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Also available October
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NARUTO
Clash of Ninja
REVOLUTION

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TOMY
VIZ
D3PUBLISHER
as seen on
CN CARTOON NETWORK

Available October 2007!

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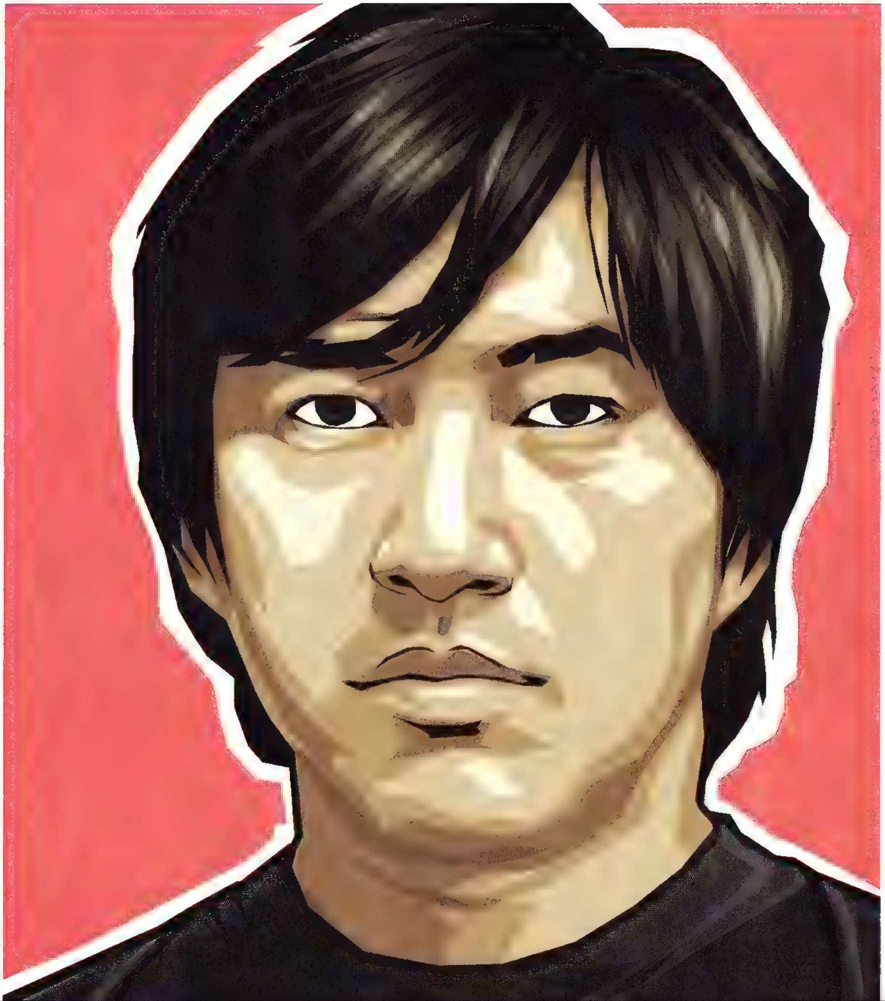

Goichi Suda

Goichi Suda (better known as "Suda 51" to his fans) is about as far from the average game creator as possible. The pro-wrestling fanatic and former undertaker has one of gaming's most distinctly offbeat styles, which he infuses into every one of his games as the CEO and creative mastermind of Grasshopper Manufacture. And now, this rising star is about to make big waves on Wii.

Suda's career turned heads from the start when, as a new scenario writer for the Japanese Super Famicom title Fire Pro Wrestling Special, he ended the button-masher with the hero committing suicide. Ever since, dark themes, bizarre twists, and a punk, pop culture vibe have become Suda's trademarks. US audiences weren't exposed to his work until many years later with the surreal action title Killer7 for GameCube, for which he often appeared in a lucha libre wrestling mask to promote. The game is a head trip—literally—in which the player controls an assassin's multiple personalities.

What turns will Suda's uncompromising creativity take next? With his No More Heroes hitting Wii in February, and future projects in development with Metal Gear creator Hideo Kojima and Resident Evil 4 director Shinji Mikami, the sky's the limit.

date of birth:

January 2, 1968

birthplace:

Nagano, Japan

position:

CEO, Grasshopper Manufacture

best known for:

Creating intense, offbeat action games like the GameCube's Killer 7 and the upcoming Wii title No More Heroes.

favorite food:

Octopus

current projects:

No More Heroes

Nintendo Power: Can you tell us how you got into the video game business?

Goichi Suda: Because of my knowledge of pro wrestling, I got a job at Human [makers of the popular Japanese series Fire Pro Wrestling] where I worked on a pro wrestling game.

NP: When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

GS: I wanted to be an astronaut.

NP: How have things changed [in your job or in the video game industry] since you started?

GS: The number of people working on a project has increased. Also, with new technologies, I can feel that there is no limit anymore to what we can create.

NP: "Travis Touchdown, Santa Destroy, Thunder Ryu, Burger Suplex"—how do you come up with such crazy-cool names?

GS: There are three kinds of characters in Japanese: Chinese characters, Hiragana, and Katakana. Such crazy-cool names were inspired by the culture of the Japanese original characters, Katakana. I named them in English first and then converted them to Katakana words. I've heard from the western press that Travis Touchdown sounds unique. I named them based on the rhythm and sounds, not on the meaning. I've always looked for names that sound comfortable and are memorable.

NP: What is the meaning behind the title of your upcoming Wii game, No More Heroes?

GS: "No More Heroes" is a quote from a song by "The Stranglers," but the primary meaning is that assassins are like heroes to Travis. If he defeats his heroes by himself, he is able to exceed them, which means that he doesn't need heroes anymore.

NP: With No More Heroes, what was it about the free-roaming city genre that was attracting to you as a game creator?

GS: With this aspect, it's possible to build a game world that feels real. There is a great charm in knowing that a player can project feelings upon this world.

NP: What drew you to create a game for Wii?

GS: It was a big challenge to develop for the totally new device. Nintendo included new inventive technology in their hardware, so I was pleased to respond by producing a game for Wii.

NP: Some have categorized Wii as a console that is primarily for casual players, but you create real gamer's games. Do you have any doubt that the console will be a great system for hardcore players?

GS: A console can be determined to be good or bad by the amount and quality of software that it has. A console that has a variety of games is ideal for both casual gamers and hardcore gamers. I think that hardcore Wii players are waiting to play a king of game, No More Heroes.

NP: In creating No More Heroes, what have you discovered about designing games for Wii?

GS: As there are limited buttons on the Wii Remote, I needed to organize the game system so that it could make broad use of the controls. I had to target the age group that I designed the game for first because players for Wii are wide ranging. Designing a game for Wii was totally different from any other game that I had designed previously. I considered the universal design concept that can do many things with limited button operation.

NP: Crazy question time: how would No More Heroes' Travis Touchdown react if he went into a restaurant for a burger, but they were all out?!

GS: That's a funny question.
Travis would say:
"Ha! For Real? ****!
Wait a minute.
What's going on?
Get a manager, Ben! I need to talk to the ****er.
He is a loser and just a ****er. I can't believe that burgers are all out in an American diner. I haven't heard about that.
What the ****!
Where is Ben? Ha...
Ben is not here for a week because he is training at headquarters? ****!
****! ****! What the ****!
What?
You're asking me for my order? I'm here to get a

GAMEOGRAPHY

Pro wrestling, anime, cutesy DS characters, and contract killers—Suda's games are nothing if not diverse. Many of them weren't released outside of Japan, but we're betting that won't be a problem anymore.

SUPER FIRE PRO WRESTLING 3 FINAL BOUT
1993, SUPER FAMICOM
SCENARIO WRITER

MICHIGAN: REPORT FROM HELL
2004, PLAYSTATION 2
DIRECTOR

KILLER7
2005, GAMECUBE
WRITER/DIRECTOR

burger. You are a ****ing dork! You're asking me for my order? Well...can I have a cherry pie?"

Travis is a kid trapped in a man's body.

NP: What aspect of creating a game do you enjoy the most?
GS: I really enjoy the moment after the master approval, when you have to wait until the release.

NP: When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem, what's your process for working through it?
GS: I try to think calmly and then take a bold action.

NP: Many of today's games feel very similar, but yours have a very distinct flavor. How would you describe your style?
GS: "Punk Game"—a game with an edge.

NP: When it comes to violence in video games, everyone seems to have their own opinion about what is acceptable and what is not. Where do you, personally, draw the line?
GS: This is a difficult issue. Each country has a different perspective, and acceptance for the freedom of entertainment is different in each country. Currently in Japan, the measure of restrictions of overall expression, not only violence, is strict. There is a saying, "do as the Romans do." It means that if you live in Rome, it's better to follow the rules and customs of Rome. Therefore, I basically follow the restrictions that are established in the country. I have a special consciousness in respect to the Japanese restrictions. I am not sure whether it's important to water down the expressions extremely for children. These days you see more realistic graphics, but when human characters are injured and do not bleed, some people take them as reality, or some people consider that they can do similar things in real life without hurting others. From the position of a creator, I always think about how scary it would be if players acknowledged this as a reality.

"I think that the balance between production value and artistic expression has reversed since the 8- and 16-bit generations of games."

NP: Many publishers see game innovation and original ideas as too big of a risk. As someone who seems to rebel against this attitude, what are your views on this situation?
GS: The first installment of every franchise and huge title starts out as an original game. And to me, original games="punk games." It's hard to produce a punk game currently because the whole industry worries about the risk. I think that it's necessary and natural to develop punk games even though there is a risk. I personally think that there is risk involved when producing huge games and sequel games; it isn't just a concern for punk games for current consoles.

NP: By today's standards your games have a reputation for being wild and offbeat, but then, the original Super Mario Bros. was a game about plumbers in a world of mushrooms. Would you say that video games have gotten more mundane over the years, and if so, why do you think this has happened?
GS: There are several factors. I think that the balance between production value and artistic expression has reversed from the 8- and 16-bit generations of games. In the current generation you have a greater abundance of resources at your disposal, and it is easier to conduct research. In order to produce graphics that convey these huge worlds, it may be that certain aspects of games need to be staged like the real world.

Another factor is the distance perspective of the player. As players become more and more used to playing in an enhanced, attractive world, the charm of a real world setting begins to wear off. A player feels more attracted to the somewhat realistic *fantasy* world presented in No More Heroes because the distance perspective is more accessible.

NP: Which do you feel is more important in a game's story: plot or character?
GS: I used to think that plot was more important than character, but Travis in No More Heroes made me realize that the character is just as important.

NP: What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect?
GS: The game creators that I respect the most are Hideo Kojima, Shinji Mikami, and Eric Chahi. As for games, I really like the Burnout series.

NP: Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
GS: I like watching movies in general. I really like Ken Loach and Krzysztof Kieslowski.

NP: Do you have any cool music, movies, manga, or anime recommendations for our readers?
GS: Here are my recommendations. Music: Perfume (a Japanese techno-idol group). Manga: Hiroshi Hirata's Gekiga is the best. Anime: I like "Legend Giant Idion" which is a motif of Glastonbury, the robot that appears in No More Heroes. The robot anime is super cool and crazy.

NP: If you could take any classic game series and apply the "Suda 51" touch, which would you pick?
GS: Mystery House.

NP: What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
GS: Going to a remote onsen [a Japanese hot spring].

NP: Which super power would you pick to have?
GS: I would love to have the super power to find game bugs and fix them in the blink of an eye.

Blood+ One Night Kiss
2006, PlayStation 2
DIRECTOR

Samurai Champloo: Sidetracked
2006, PlayStation 2
WRITER/DIRECTOR

Contact
2006, Nintendo DS
PRODUCER

No More Heroes
2008, Wii
WRITER/DIRECTOR

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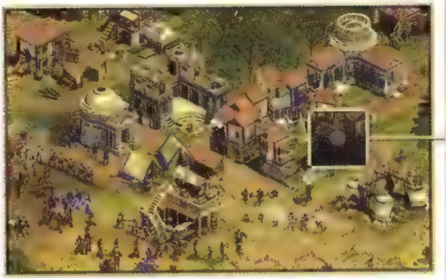
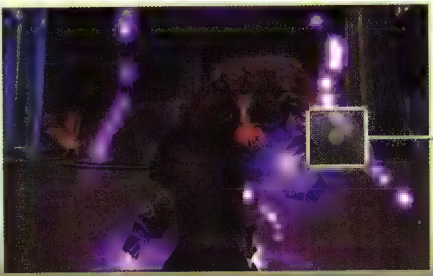
DEMOS

MODS

PATCHES





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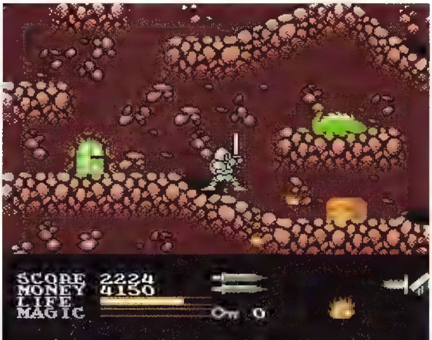
GAME LINKS EVOLVED

IRONSWORD: WIZARDS & WARRIORS II

Rare's Wizards & Warriors sequel isn't just the game with Fabio—it's an adventure for the ages.



From forests to volcanos, from caves to clouds, Kuros journeyed to the ends of the Earth to collect the pieces of the shattered Ironsword.

IRONSWORD
WIZARDS & WARRIORS II
Acclaim

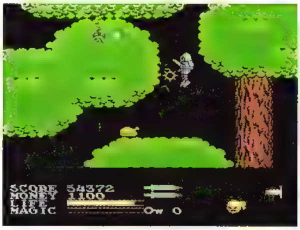
Platform: NES
Developer: Rare
Publisher: Acclaim
Release Date: December 1989
Covered in Issues: 7, 9, 12, 18
Roast Chickens: Lots

Long ago, back when he actually *could* believe it wasn't butter, iconic male model Fabio was virtually everywhere; you couldn't walk into a store without seeing his studly visage leering at you from dozens if not hundreds of romance novels. But more significantly for gamers, he also posed for the box art of Acclaim's Ironsword: Wizards & Warriors II—and a legend was born. The novelty of a metal-and-leather-clad Fabio on the box of a Nintendo game has attained mythic status and become Ironsword's defining characteristic. But don't judge a game by its cover. Look beyond Fabio's rippling muscles and you'll find a game that's pretty darn good.

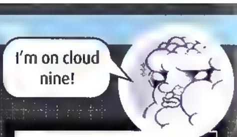
Continuing in the tradition of the original Wizards & Warriors, Ironsword was a fantasy-themed adventure game with a strong emphasis on tricky platforming. Jumping was far more important than swinging your sword, and you were more likely to kill foes by leaping into them with your blade than actually standing your ground and fighting. Ironically, hero Kuros looked nothing like the He-Man-inspired Fabio; Kuros was clad in armor from head to toe, and in one of the many improvements upon the first Wizards & Warriors, you could find new weapons, helmets, and shields that altered Kuros's onscreen appearance.

Unlike its predecessor, Ironsword didn't feature colored keys or require you to collect hundreds of gems to proceed, but it did significantly expand upon the formula with shops, minigames, and magic spells, as well as bigger stages promoting more exploration. In his quest to defeat the wizard Malkil once and for all, Kuros was required to visit four vast elemental realms—those of wind, water, fire, and earth—and earn the trust of each realm's animal king before acquiring the magic spell that could smite the world's boss. Defeating each boss rewarded Kuros with a piece of the Ironsword—the weapon that would prepare him for the final showdown on Icefire Mountain.

Top-notch presentation—bold, colorful graphics and a memorable soundtrack—helped pull players into the adventure, and a password feature kept fans coming back for more in spite of the substantial challenge. (The last boss was particularly tough!) While it's arguable whether the game was better than the first Wizards & Warriors, there's no question that when it comes to fantasy, adventure, and hunky male models, nothing fits the bill like Ironsword. —**Chris H.**

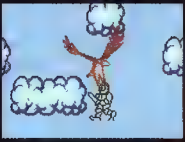


Have a favorite classic game you'd like to see revisited?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback.
nintendopower@futureus.com

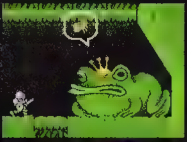

I'm on cloud nine!

BEASTS AND BURDENS

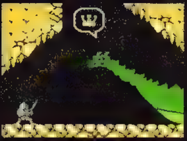
As Kuros explored the realm of Sindarin and eliminated Malkil's evil influence, he had to earn the approval of each region's animal king. The animal kings sure were demanding, however—they wanted gifts to let him proceed. What's with the requests when Kuros is trying to save your freaking country? Sheesh!



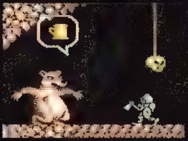
As if finding a golden egg weren't tough enough, the eagle rewards Kuros by carrying him *by his head*. How's that for gratitude?



The frog king wants a fly—and of course it has to be gold. He must have been one spoiled tadpole.



Hopefully, Kuros obtained the crown for the dragon by beating down the bloated frog.



Seriously, the bear wants a tankard of ale? Kids, don't be fooled. Beer and bears don't mix.

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REVIEWS

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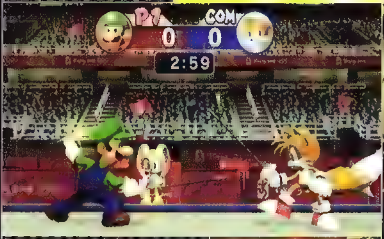
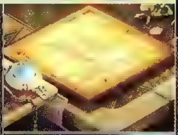
Mario's stellar Wii debut is out of this world!

Manhunt 2, Mario Party DS, Tomb Raider Anniversary, Trauma Center: New Blood, and more.



79

Does Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games live up to its all-star cast?



Judge of Wings

84

Was the DS sequel to Final Fantasy XII worth the long wait?

84

Is Link as good with a crossbow as he is with a sword?

MARIO MANIACS, JUMP FOR JOY

SUPER MARIO GALAXY

RATING: 9.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
ESRB: EVERYONE

It sure seems like fans have to wait a long time between big Mario titles. But when a game like Super Mario Galaxy comes along, all is forgiven—the fresh platforming aspects and beautiful imagery make the time spent waiting well worth it. And classic elements such as the ever-present Goombas and Toads, as well as a few cameo appearances by Luigi, remind you that you're still playing the Mario series that you know and love. The Super Mario Galaxy adventure begins as one would expect, with Bowser disrupting a party in the Mushroom Kingdom and abducting Princess Peach. Something happens and you end up in a place called the Comet Observatory, surrounded by star-shaped creatures named Lumas. From there, the game rolls out the story via chapters that explain the existence and purpose of the Comet Observatory and its leader, Rosalina. The plot is conveyed in a weird way—you listen to Rosalina read from a children's storybook. There are surely better ways to explain the plot; this feels like a shortcut that does a disservice to the fans who have grown up with Mario.

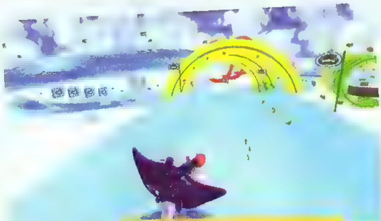
Regardless of the presentation, Galaxy continues the Mario series' proud tradition of innovative platforming. On most of the stages (called galaxies), Mario's activities take place on small planetoids—sometimes he can circumnavigate them, and sometimes he must stay on one side of a planetoid. Gravity plays a huge role in the action and, fortunately, it doesn't take long to acquire a feel for how it affects your movements. Nonetheless, and even with Galaxy's scary-smart camera following you obediently across curved, 3-D surfaces, you will sometimes make a leap that you're sure is correct, only to be tossed into deep space. Crazy gravity or no, Mario's new ability-granting outfits weave into the gameplay well, too—it's nice to see the long-awaited return of Fire Mario, and Boo Mario is comically great. All of the outfits probably could have been utilized even more than they were, but the gameplay balance between them and regular Mario is perfectly adequate.

Galaxy doesn't go out of its way to remind you of the remote-and-nunchuk control scheme. This is undeniably a good thing, particularly to shake off the notion that Wii control is simply a gimmick—Galaxy shows that the controls have real, positive uses that can be integrated smoothly into conventional games, as well as to create new genres. By jiggling either the remote or the nunchuk, you can get extra height on jumps or spin to hit nearby enemies. Spinning also lets you hit switches and has a few context-sensitive uses, such as to commence skating while on ice.

In Mario titles of the past, the integration of great graphics to enhance the gameplay has been a key feature—Super Mario 64's 3-D worlds and the water in Super Mario Sunshine come to mind—and Galaxy follows suit. The expansive 3-D worlds would be entirely innavigable if it weren't for visual cues created by reflections, shadows, and transparencies that probably couldn't have been done on prior hardware. As we saw with Metroid Prime 3, Nintendo has simply been able to get more out of its hardware than other developers have. Crisp, vibrant surroundings and minimal draw-in despite the spacious worlds allow you to remain immersed in the vibrant galaxies. And the environments dazzle with real-time lighting particle effects that again prove the Wii isn't just about a new controller.

For the most part, Super Mario Galaxy does an excellent job of organizing its levels in terms of difficulty—nearly every new challenge is a little bit harder than its predecessor. But occasionally you'll come across a regular mission that is easier or much more difficult than the challenges around it (besides the special challenges that are intentionally much tougher than the rest). It's not enough to truly detract from the experience, but it does disrupt the gameplay rhythm. And unfortunately, Galaxy as a whole doesn't seem to be able to overcome the industry's slow, steady march toward easier games; in particular, the puzzle-oriented elements seem especially simple. The game is still challenging, for sure, but it won't keep hard-core gamers up at night.

Despite a few weak spots, Mario's debut effort on the Wii is stellar. The diverse gameplay elements and sheer platforming joy will keep you mesmerized.
—CHRIS SH.



This super-fun side-game redefines "space race."

WRITERS' BLOCK

[illegible] WHAT KIND OF Wii CHANNEL WOULD NINTENDO [illegible]

Because playing games all day long just isn't enough.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

How about an Ask Reggie Channel? You could submit questions, and once a week Reggie would provide answers. Or he'd just take your name if you asked something stupid.

CHRIS SHEPPERD

I'd love to see a fantasy sports tracker—the Wii could grab my players' stats and remind me to set my roster.

CHRIS SLATE

I'd like an events calendar to keep track of appointments and things that need done around the house. Best of all, Nintendo could use WiiConnect24 to update my calendar with up-to-date game release info.

STEVE THOMASON

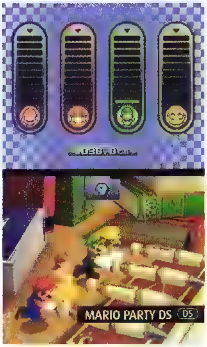
We just had an earthquake here in the San Francisco Bay Area, so I want a "Bail Out!" channel that warns me of impending disasters.

SCOTT PELLAND

I'd love a Mii Town Channel. Mii parades and contests are fine, but Miis deserve rich, interesting lives, which would include visits to other Mii Towns around the globe.

JUSTIN CHENG

I'd *really* like to see a channel that has demos of upcoming or recently released Wii games. It's not the most creative or original idea, but it would be very useful.


MARIO PARTY DS

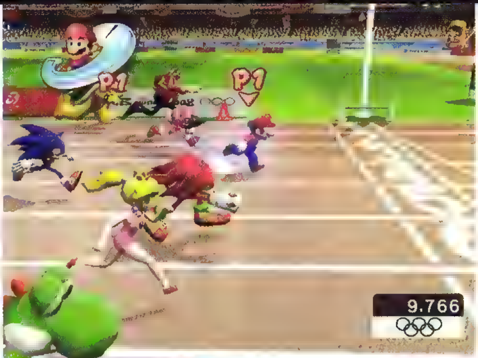
MARIO PARTY DS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: HUDSON
ESRB: EVERYONE

Taking your party on the road just got easy thanks to the first multiplayer portable Mario Party game. If you're already a Mario Partygoer, the basic game elements will come as no surprise. The goal of the five board games is to collect coins so you can buy the most stars. Each turn consists of rolling dice, choosing paths, landing on a variety of spaces, and obtaining coins, and ends with a frantic minigame that everyone plays. The minigames are the highlight of any Mario Party experience, and with the DS's unique interface, this title's 70-plus minigames are a breath of fresh air: knocking over Thwomps with a blast of your mighty breath (via the mic), chasing opponents on a train track (by button mashing), or slicing veggies as fast as you can (with the stylus) are just a few examples. As usual, some minigames team you with one or two players, while in others everyone is on their own. A few minigames are hard to understand at first, but they are all fun, fast, and frenzied if you read the instructions.

Although the game doesn't support online play, Mario Party DS's LAN option lets you share much of the action wirelessly with up to three friends using just one game card. If you want to practice your minigame skills or unlock minigames in the Story mode, however, you can fly solo. There's even a single-player puzzle collection for a change of pace. But this game is made to party. —SCOTT P.



THE DREAM DUO WIN THE SILVER

MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA
ESRB: EVERYONE

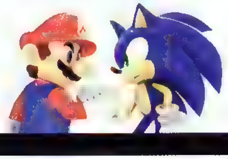
The impossible dream is officially a reality: Daisy and Vector are finally appearing in a game together. (Oh, and a certain plumber and hedgehog are in there, too.)

Even after weeks of playing, I still get a kick out of seeing Mario square off against Sonic. There are 16 superstars in all, including longtime favorites like Yoshi, Luigi, Bowser, Tails, Knuckles, and Dr. Eggman. You can also choose to play as any Mii that you've created—it's incredibly cool to see yourself in the mix with this all-star cast. Up to four people can compete at once, which is really how this game should be played. Talking trash and watching your opponents work their Wii remotes is always better than going solo.

The game's 20 events cover a wide variety of sports types, including track, aquatics, gymnastics, archery, fencing, and more. The controls are generally pretty simple, such as raising and lowering the remote and nunchuk alternately in a drumming motion to run. We have our favorite events around the office, but none of them truly stand head and shoulders above the rest—there's nothing in the lineup in the same league as, say, Wii Sports Tennis or Bowling. For the most part, they are never especially amazing or particularly bad—they're all just "pretty fun."

The game gives you some good reasons to play even when your buddies aren't over, though. I particularly like Mission mode, which offers special character-specific challenges. There are also extra events to unlock and trophies and medals to collect, and you can upload your records to a leaderboard via Wi-Fi. The bonus minigames in Records mode, however, are so simple and boring that you'll quickly start losing on purpose just to get out of there.

Mario & Sonic's multiplayer action and sheer volume of events and modes make it a worthwhile title, and the historic team-up of two of gaming's biggest icons pushes it over the top. While the game never really blows you away, it's hard to imagine that any fans of Mario, Sonic, or party games wouldn't be glad to have this in their collection. —CHRIS SL.



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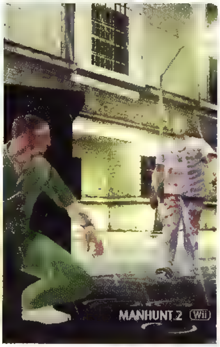
RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS 2 Wii



RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS 2

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft
ESRB: Everyone 10+

The first Rayman Raving Rabbids made a fairly big splash because it was one of the few Wii launch titles to really explore the newfangled controller's capabilities. A year later, there's no shortage of similar minigame collections on the console, so much of the novelty has worn off. That said, this is one of the better such compilations out there, and it improves on the original in some significant ways. Perhaps most important is that all of the minigames are designed to accommodate up to four players, making this a vastly superior party option to its predecessor. It also does a nice job of building on the two best elements from the first game: the music stages and the first-person-shooter segments. The former now allows you to choose from one of four instruments (or vocals), and though the basic gameplay is the same for each—shake the Wii remote and nunchuk to the onscreen cues—the beats differ to match your selection. As a result, playing lead guitar on a song feels quite a bit different from playing drums. The first-person shooter segments feature something we haven't seen much of since the Sega CD days—full-motion video gameplay environments. It's a neat effect, and the way the rabbids interact with real-world locales is often hilarious. Speaking of which, those dim-witted, maniacal bunnies are the stars of the show to an even greater degree than last time, and the game benefits tremendously from their deranged antics (especially when they're lampooning beloved pop-culture icons such as Indiana Jones). Unfortunately, that carries things only so far. As funny and clever as the festivities can be, they don't always equate to fun gameplay. Many of the challenges are overly simplistic, while others grow tedious pretty quickly. If you're looking for something to enjoy with friends, you could certainly do much worse, but if the series reaches part three, one hopes more effort goes into creating play mechanics as compelling as the ideas behind them. —Steve T.

MANHUNT 2

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER: Rockstar Toronto
ESRB: Mature

After its much-publicized delay, Rockstar's highly controversial Manhunt 2 is finally on store shelves. Was it worth the wait? Yes, mostly. Sneaking up and using the Wii remote to gruesomely dispatch your prey is sickeningly satisfying, but the screen filter that obscures the nastier scenes (a concession to avoid an Adults Only rating) is unfortunate. The sounds that come from the Wii remote's speaker—of knocking, bludgeoning, gunshots, etc.—add a nice layer of immersion, however. Firearms, which you get pretty early on, take away from the game's usually high level of intensity (there's no need to be stealthy when you have a shotgun in hand), but the pace of the game is increased dramatically. Unfortunately, the story, while engaging, is predictable. —Justin C.

HOSTILE TAKEOVER

RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: Capcom
ESRB: Mature

Prior attempts to turn Resident Evil into a light-gun shooter have been unmitigated disasters, but it really does seem a natural fit. After all, Sega's House of the Dead franchise has proven on multiple occasions that blasting wave after wave of zombies can be a good time. Fortunately, Capcom's survival-horror saga finally realizes that potential with The Umbrella Chronicles. Filling your undead assailants with lead feels suitably meaty, and the game offers a satisfying selection of firearms with which to do so. Plus, the shaky targeting reticle that plagued preview versions of the game has been remedied, providing the accuracy necessary to put a shot right where you want it (that is, in the skull of a fast-approaching zombie).

As light-gun shooters go, The Umbrella Chronicles contains a startling amount of content. The game clocks in at over 20 hours, retracing the events of Resident Evils 0, 1, and 3 before venturing into new territory that details the downfall of the Umbrella Corporation. It also includes a number of bonus missions that will be of particular interest to hardcore fans. We get to see what happened to Rebecca between parts 0 and 1, for instance, as well as Wesker's escape from the mansion after being left for dead. Speaking of Wesker, the sunglass-wearing badass plays a major role in the game, and as narrator he sheds new light on certain events. For those of us who enjoy the series' cheesy yet strangely intriguing narrative, The Umbrella Chronicles does a nice job of filling in the gaps. The presentation is also top-notch; high-quality cut-scenes are sprinkled generously throughout, and the voice acting has that certain... flourish for which the franchise is known. It bears mentioning that I've never seen a game where my co-workers disagreed so vehemently on whether the graphics were any good. Granted some of the textures look muddy up close, but I think the overall aesthetic is pretty impressive given the complexity of the environments (which include lots of destructible elements) and superb lighting.

How does the game play with the new Wii Zapper? While I do appreciate the extra tangibility, aiming with the peripheral is a bit clunky for my tastes.

With all of its fan service, The Umbrella Chronicles will definitely have the biggest impact on Resident Evil devotees, but the quality gunplay should satisfy just about anyone with an itchy trigger finger. —Steve T.

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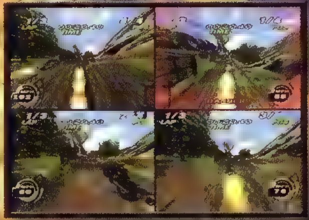

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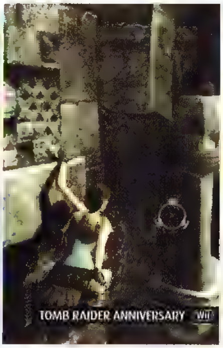
Wii

UBISOFT

GHOST SQUAD (Wii)

GODZILLA UNLEASHED (Wii)

Stuff with jam!
COOKING MAMA 2 (DS)


TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY (Wii)

ORCS & ELVES (DS)

GHOST SQUAD

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: POLYGON MAGIC/AM2
ESRB: TEEN

Make no mistake; Ghost Squad is an arcade game through and through. This light-gun shooter from the folks that brought us such genre classics as Virtua Cop and House of the Dead is shallow, primitive, and a heck of a lot of fun. Though the game has only three stages, each contains multiple routes that you'll unlock on successive playthroughs, and mowing down the bad guys is so immensely satisfying that it never seems to get old. Plus, you've gotta love that classic Sega goofiness: you're supposed to be part of this elite stealth unit, yet your plan of action is always to pretty much barge in and blast everything in sight. The game is certainly no masterpiece, but if you're in the mood for some mindless, old-school entertainment, it's $30 well spent. —STEVE T.

GODZILLA UNLEASHED

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: ATARI
DEVELOPER: PIPEWORKS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Just because Godzilla Unleashed is based on a property that involves guys running around in rubber suits doesn't mean it should *feel* like it is. True to form, Godzilla and his giant monster cohorts aren't exactly the most responsive creatures around with either their movements or their attacks, and the result is a game that feels clumsy and lends itself to button-mashing and crazed remote-waggling. The game does have its merits, however; there's some strategy in the variety of melee attacks, projectiles, throws, and defensive maneuvers, and the visuals are fairly impressive. The versus battles (for up to four players) boast tons of customization features, but it's too bad that so many of the characters and environments take an exorbitant amount of effort to unlock. Though Godzilla Unleashed is fairly accessible, even casual gamers may wonder why their creatures don't always do what they want. —CHRIS H.

COOKING MAMA 2: DINNER WITH FRIENDS

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: MAJESCO
DEVELOPER: OFFICE GAMES
ESRB: EVERYONE

Now that the Cooking Mama series has reached its third installment (and is a bona fide success) it's going to need more to get by than just a kitchen-load of addictive touch-screen minigames and tons of quirky charm. Don't get me wrong—the new recipes are a blast to concoct, and the touch-driven minigames are once again fun and varied—but the game feels more like an expansion pack than a true sequel, especially since there's still no story or career mode, and you can do little more than prepare individual recipes. Lack of structure aside, Cooking Mama 2 is a tasty treat. The developers have perfected their use of responsive and intuitive touch-screen controls, and even though the challenge is lower than that of the original Cooking Mama, plentiful unlockables encourage replay. Hopefully the next entry in the series will be more substantial, however. —CHRIS H.

TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: EIDOS
DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
ESRB: TEEN

Video games' first lady, Lara Croft, is celebrating her 10th birthday this year, and while she looks like she hasn't aged a bit, her very first adventure hasn't been so fortunate. Even though it's undergone a decent graphical redesign from the original Tomb Raider, Anniversary feels like a 10-year-old game (more on that below). Still, it's easy to see why Tomb Raider succeeded in the first place—for a 3-D platformer, the level design was way ahead of its time in 1997, and is bested only by the likes of Prince of Persia now. Ms. Croft is still a great main character, too—her combination of versatility and fearlessness makes her one of the best protagonists in gaming.

In addition to the visual enhancements, Anniversary includes a good measure of Wii functionality: You aim your guns, flashlight, and grapple hook via the pointer, and you fire the grapple by shaking the nunchuk. And there are some neat little effects added onto puzzle solving to make them a little more interesting, such as brushing the dust off a hieroglyph by mimicking the actual motion via the Wii remote.

Unfortunately, Anniversary also suffers from more than its fair share of technical problems. An unsteady, poor-tracking camera makes intricate sections much more frustrating than fun. It's difficult enough to line yourself up for your next jump or swing around to face an oncoming enemy because character movement is so stiff—an uncooperative camera only makes it worse. There are also frame-rate and hit-detection issues (both in catching ledges and in targeting enemies) that just shouldn't exist. Ultimately, these little problems bring down what was, and could still have been, a truly celebrated game. —CHRIS SH.

ORCS & ELVES

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE/FOUNTAINHEAD ENTERTAINMENT
ESRB: TEEN

Orcs & Elves was originally released as a cell-phone game, and despite substantial upgrades for the DS version, this 3-D dungeon crawler just doesn't have what it takes to stand out on a dedicated gaming platform. The action feels awfully archaic, with a plodding turn-based system that requires very little strategy. You'll obtain a number of different weapons during your quest, but that's not enough to prevent the overly basic combat from becoming repetitive. The generic fantasy setting certainly doesn't help matters, and flat, poorly animated sprites stick out like a sore thumb against their (admittedly impressive) polygonal surroundings. The game is short at about five or six hours, though I suppose it doesn't matter when you tire of the proceedings after 15 minutes. —STEVE T.

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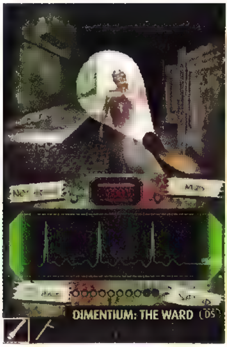
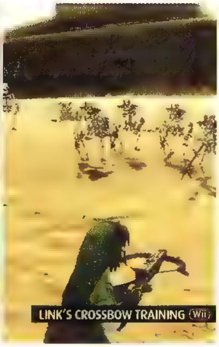
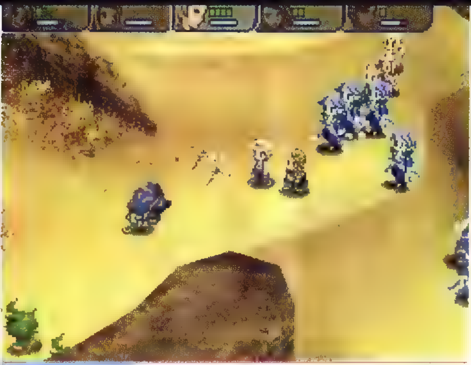

DIMENTIUM: THE WARD (DS)


LINK'S CROSSBOW TRAINING (Wii)



DEMENTIUM: THE WARD

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **GAMECOCK**
DEVELOPER: **RENEGADE KID**
ESRB: **MATURE**

The DS hasn't seen much blood outside of Trauma Center, but Dementium: The Ward wears its M rating as a badge of honor and paints the walls red with it. This first-person shooter is set in a grisly mental institution where a series of grotesque genetic experiments were held, and unfortunately, you're the unlucky soul charged with fending off the mutated results.

Artful sound and lighting effects come together to create one of the most disturbing worlds that the DS has ever seen. Most of the tension stems from the more-restrained touches, though, such as flashes of illuminating lightning and tiny bumps in the night. Once your anxiety hits boiling point, the dead-end atmosphere is punctuated by a blood-curdling shriek or a hyper-aggressive humanoid.

Moving about the dreary 3-D environments with the Control Pad while dragging the stylus to aim and using the shoulder buttons to fire performs wonderfully with no slowdown. Growling beasties and slithery creatures burst forth unexpectedly from the darkness, and to dispose of them quickly and efficiently, you'll need precision accuracy to exploit their weak points. The crosshair can get hard to see, and occasionally touch-screen menus are triggered accidentally, but luckily Dementium's more about first-person survival than furious shooting. Ammo is limited, and most of your time is spent wielding a flashlight to reveal clues scattered about the drab corridors in order to solve the cleverly designed puzzles.

This is one genuinely frightening experience, and the brave of heart will want to play in the dark, with headphones, for maximum scares. Equal parts impressive and original, Dementium is a horrifying nightmare come to life, and a dream come true for older gamers. —**CHRIS A.**

LINK'S CROSSBOW TRAINING

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **TEEN**

In the way that Link's Crossbow Training shows the potential of the Zapper, it couldn't be much better. From stationary target practice to FPS-style combat, the versatility of the peripheral shines through. In nearly every other way, however, the game (which comes packed in with the Zapper) is a disappointment. It's just too darn short—you'll probably make it through the entire single-player mode in just over an hour (add another hour to get platinum medals on every stage). There's not much incentive to shoot for high scores other than to show up your friends—some unlockable levels or cheats would have gone a long way toward making you want to play through the game more than once. At least Link's Crossbow Training serves up a healthy dose of fan service, with memorable locales and a few tricky bosses from Twilight Princess on display. —**CHRIS SH.**

REAL-TIME FANTASY

FINAL FANTASY XII: REVENANT WINGS

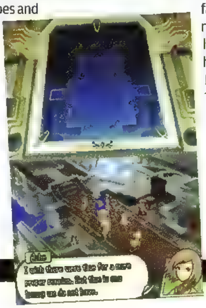
RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **THINK & FEEL INC.**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

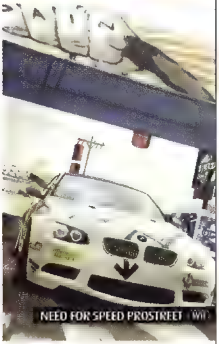
If there's one thing that's consistent about Final Fantasy titles, it's their high production values. Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings is no exception—the cut-scenes are astonishing, the music is amazing, and the character and background graphics look excellent. If there's another thing consistent about the series, it's that it isn't afraid to take risks. The original Final Fantasy XII on PlayStation 2 took a big chance with its non-random, non-turn-based battle system, and the follow-up, Revenant Wings, takes even bigger risks by essentially abandoning a traditional RPG formula in favor of real-time strategy gameplay in which you command dozens of heroes and summoned monsters against dozens of foes in massive army-versus-army battles. Do the risks pay off? For the most part, yes—but not without a few problems along the way.

The gameplay fundamentals work well most of the time. Clicking on units to command them to move and attack is intuitive, and the inclusion of elemental affinities, a wide array of spells and equipment, and rock-paper-scissors-style character classes make for some reasonably deep strategic elements. When the action really heats up, however, some problems arise. With so many characters on the screen, it becomes tricky to select the one you want, and there are some AI problems as well—characters occasionally get stuck running into each other or get caught in parts of the environments. Along with the sheer chaos of so much action going on at once, this can result in a few frustrating battles.

Fortunately, a great storyline makes it easy to keep going in spite of the uneven difficulty. Taken on its own, the epic story is interesting if not particularly groundbreaking, but as a continuation of FFXII it becomes very compelling for fans who are dying to revisit some familiar locales and see what happens to Vaan, Ashe, Penelo, and company. Though Revenant Wings has some room for improvement, it offers an enjoyable, different take on Final Fantasy, especially for hard-core FF fans and RTS enthusiasts. —**CHRIS H.**



THE SIMPSONS GAME (Wii)



THE SIMPSONS GAME

RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: REBELLION
ESRB: TEEN

It's ironic that The Simpsons Game is so quick to point out video game clichés, yet falls prey to some of the worst ones, such as touchy controls, bad collision detection, awful partner AI, and an atrocious camera that fights you every step of the way. Despite the property's simple aesthetic, the game looks poor as well (aside from the excellent cutscenes). It's too bad the execution fails so miserably, because many of the ideas are great. The game parodies are funny for the most part, and include gems such as a guest appearance by Sims creator Will Wright and a Grand Theft Auto spoof in which you use violence to rebuild the city into a nice, friendly town. Clever ideas, however, don't make up for the pathetic gameplay. —CHRIS H.

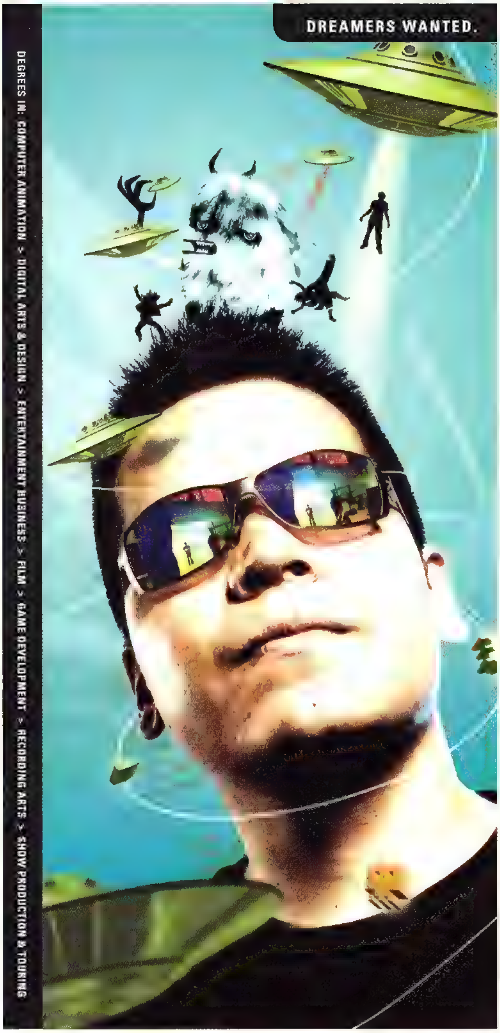
NEED FOR SPEED PRO STREET

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: EA BLACK BOX
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

The Need for Speed franchise emerges from the shadows of the underground street racing scene this year with a dose of social conscience, putting you in competition with pro racers in organized events. Career mode takes you from one event to another (each featuring multiple races) in an effort to qualify to challenge the game's four Race Kings. Not only do you need to win; you must "dominate" the other drivers by large margins. Tuning, repairing, and customizing your rides (55 cars are available, including late models and classics) is an important part of the game, made even more critical because any damage you incur in a race will impact your car's performance. The coolest customization feature is Autosculpt, which lets you manipulate your car's body parts, and the modifications will actually impact performance.

Out on the track, you'll race primarily in two modes—Grip and Drag races. Holding the Wii remote in both hands with the buttons face-up creates a steering-wheel-style control for Grip (road) races, while holding the remote vertically to mimic a shifter is the focus of the Drag control scheme. Both styles give you an excellent hands-on feel that brings home the sense of speed and real-world challenge. There's nothing revolutionary here, and I miss the police-chase emphasis of some earlier Need for Speed games, but with a gritty graphics style and a soundtrack featuring 35 hard-driving cuts from artists such as Klaxons, Datarock, and Avenged Sevenfold, the overall package makes for a fun and realistic racer—one that has been sorely needed on Wii. —SCOTT P.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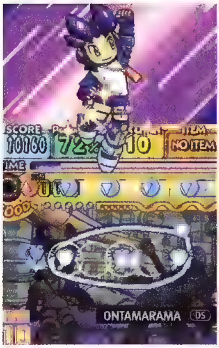
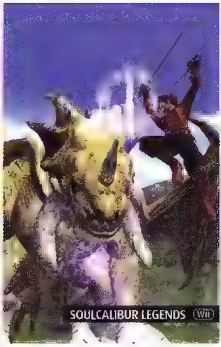
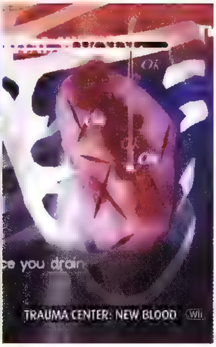
MEDAL OF HONOR HEROES 2 (Wii)



ONTAMARAMA (DS)


SOULCALIBUR LEGENDS (Wii)



TRAUMA CENTER: NEW BLOOD (Wii)

MEDAL OF HONOR HEROES 2

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: EA Canada
ESRB: Teen

The pleasantly surprising thing about Medal of Honor Heroes 2 is that it may be the Wii's best-controlling first-person shooter so far. And not only does it control well, it also makes great use of the remote and nunchuk for added interactivity. As for the gameplay itself, the short single-player campaign is enjoyable enough; too bad the AI for both allies and enemies isn't particularly intelligent. Even so, these Nazis are marksmen that resiliently shrug off several hits and can overwhelm you with their numbers, which can be frustrating. Luckily, the on-rails Arcade mode (perfect for the Wii Zapper, though you can also use the Zapper in the Campaign mode) and the 32-player online multiplayer (which uses EA's own online service, so no friend codes required) help offset these issues. —Justin C.

ONTAMARAMA

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: Atlus
DEVELOPER: Noise Factory
ESRB: Everyone

Beneath Ontamarama's goofball story and typical anime presentation lies a simple but intense music game. Tapping or circling characters (called Ontama) on the touch screen while rhythmically pushing directions on the Control Pad adds a challenging new twist to the genre, and the unique attention-splitting action becomes increasingly satisfying as you conquer the more-difficult stages. Though the upbeat, somewhat generic J-pop soundtrack isn't particularly memorable (most of the songs lack vocals), it gets the job done, and plentiful unlockables will keep you coming back for more. One sore spot is the flaky response of the circling mechanic—it makes the game tougher than it should be. In spite of its flaws, Ontamarama is a solid rhythm game that will appeal to gamers who haven't had much to groove to on DS since last year's Elite Beat Agents. —Chris H.

SOULCALIBUR LEGENDS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai
DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai
ESRB: Teen

Sure, Soulcalibur Legends isn't exactly the fighting game we were all hoping for, but more Soulcalibur can't be a bad thing...right? And, hey, Tales of Symphonia's Lloyd Irving (albeit with a different English voice actor) is one of the game's seven playable characters. Including him is not only a great bit of fan service; he also fits into the world of Soulcalibur pretty well. It's too bad, though, that the game feels like it would have worked better as a side mode than as a full game (think Devil Within from Tekken 5). Worse, fighting the same bad guys in the same levels over and over and over again just makes the whole experience feel tedious and can become physically fatiguing after repeatedly waggling the Wii remote. —Justin C.

TRAUMA CENTER: NEW BLOOD

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Atlus
DEVELOPER: Atlus
ESRB: Teen

It's a shame that the sequel to one of last year's most innovative games is such an uncreative carbon copy, right down to a near-identical story. Still though, the Trauma Center formula is as fun as ever in New Blood.

The game is a quirky mix of hospital drama and fast-paced arcade-style operations. Some of the more creative procedures involve setting bones (by twisting the Wii remote to piece together bone fragments like a puzzle), replacing a pacemaker (where you massage the heart), and grafting skin to a burn victim. Thankfully, the patients look more like mannequins than real people, so there's nothing to gross you out.

No new tools have been added, sadly; you still use the scalpel, antibiotic gel, drain, sonar, laser, forceps, and syringe, and each has unique controls that are a joy to use. Unfortunately, drawing a star to initiate the Healing Touch—a special move that temporarily slows time—is just as tricky as it was in Second Opinion. Frantically trying to get the game to recognize your stars is a frustrating way to fail a mission.

Speaking of failing missions, this game is very tough. Even Easy mode can be difficult, and Normal gets pretty insane early on. Hard mode is just sadistic. While some will welcome the challenge, this game is probably a poor choice for players with little patience. Sometimes the difficulty comes from instructions that are unclear. This doesn't happen often, but it can get you really stuck when it does.

Players can upload their best scores to leaderboards via Wi-Fi for the first time, which is nice, but a much more significant new addition is that two players can play through the entire game cooperatively. This is a blast, and coordinating operations with a second surgeon feels even more like the real thing.

If you missed out on Trauma Center before, this is the version to get. If you're a series veteran, then—as good as New Blood is—it's really just more of the same, so it's your call. If you're on the fence, I highly recommend the two-player mode. There's nothing like frantically yelling "suture that wound!" at player 2. —Chris Sl.

ALSO THIS MONTH

For the Wii: Ben 10: Protector of Earth, Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity, Dragon Ball Z Budokai: Tenkaichi 3, The Golden Compass, High School Musical: Sing It!, Indoor Sports, Indy 500 Legends, Jenga, Kawasaki Quad Bikes, My Word Coach, Nicktoons: Attack of Toybots, Smarty Pants **For the DS:** Alvin and the Chipmunks, Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader, Boogie, Build A Bear Workshop, Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Corvette Evolution GT, Draglade, Garfield Gets Real, Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash, The Golden Compass, Hannah Montana: Music Jam, Impossible Mission, LifeSigns: Surgical Unit, Master of Illusion, Monster Jam, Need for Speed Pro Street, Panzer Tactics, Puzzle de Harvest Moon, Rayman Raving Rabbids 2, The Simpsons, Ultimate Mortal Kombat

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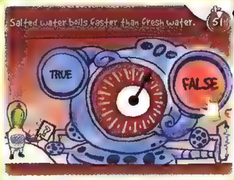
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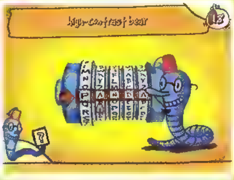
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Wii

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HOLIDAY HIT PARADE

The fourth quarter is traditionally filled with quality games, and 2007 is no exception. Loads of high-ranking games slide into the review archive this month, including Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn (9.5), Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure (9.0), and Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock (9.0) for Wii. On the DS front, check out Contra 4, Mega Man ZX Advent, Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations, and Bleach: Blade of Fate, each of which scored an 8.5. That's a score of 34 all together. Beat that!

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii				
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
The Ant Bully	N/	Midway	211	E10+
Avatar: The Last Airbender	N/A	THQ	211	E10+
Barnyard	N/A	THQ	211	E10+
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Bionicle Heroes	5.0	Eidos	216	E10+
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bust-a-Move Bash!	6.5	Majesco	217	E
Call of Duty 3	6.5	Activision	211	T
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
Cars	N/A	THQ	211	E
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	7.0	Buena Vista	212	E10+
Cooking Mama· Cook Off	7.5	Majesco	216	E
Cosmic Family	N/A	Ubisoft	215	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2	7.0	Atari	211	T
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
Elebits	7.5	Konami	212	E
Escape from Bug Island!	3.5	Eidos	217	M
Excite Truck	8.5	Nintendo	211	E
Far Cry. Vengeance	4.0	Ubisoft	212	M
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
The Godfather: Blackhand Edition	8.0	Electronic Arts	216	M
The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy	N/A	Midway	211	E10+
GT Pro Series	5.0	Ubisoft	211	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Happy Feet	4.5	Midway	211	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Heatseeker	7.5	Codemasters	215	T
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	N/A	Sierra	212	E10+
Kororinpa: Marble Mania	7.0	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	9.5	Nintendo	211	T
LEGO Star Wars The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Mario Party 8	7.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance	8.0	Activision	211	T
Medal of Honor: Vanguard	6 0	Electronic Arts	217	T
Meet the Robinsons	6.5	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metal Slug Anthology	8.0	SNK Playmore USA	211	T
Metroid Prime 3. Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
Monster 4x4. World Circuit	6.5	Ubisoft	211	E
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	8.0	Midway	217	M
MySims	7 0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need for Speed: Carbon	6.0	Electronic Arts	212	E10+
Open Season	N/A	Ubisoft	211	E10+
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	4 5	Disney Interactive	217	T
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
Prince of Persia: Rival Swords	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Rampage: Total Destruction	6.5	Midway	211	E10+
Rapala Tournament Fishing	N/A	Activision	212	E
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids	7.5	Ubisoft	211	E
Red Steel	8.0	Ubisoft	211	T
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
Sonic and the Secret Rings	8.5	Sega	214	E
Spider-Man 3	6 0	Activision	217	T
SpongeBob SquarePants. Creature from the Krusty Krab	7.0	THQ	211	E
SSX Blur	8.5	Electronic Arts	215	E
Super Paper Mario	9.5	Nintendo	216	E
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz	8.5	Sega	211	E
Super Swing Golf	7.5	Tecmo	212	E
Surf's Up	6.0	Ubisoft	217	E10+
Tamagotchi: Party On!	2.5	Namco Bandai	217	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
TMNT	5.0	Ubisoft	215	E10+
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent	6.0	Ubisoft	211	M
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	7.5	Activision	212	E10+
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: Second Opinion	8.5	Atlus	211	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
WarioWare: Smooth Moves	9.0	Nintendo	212	E
Wii Play	7 0	Nintendo	213	E
Wii Sports	8.0, 8.5	Nintendo	211	E
Wing Island	5.5	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
World Series of Poker: Tournament of Champions	N/A	Activision	212	T
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO GAMECUBE				
Bionicle Heroes	5.0	Eidos	211	E10+
Happy Feet	N/A	Midway	211	E
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	9.5	Nintendo	212	T
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Need For Speed: Carbon	7.5	Electronic Arts	211	E10+
Radio Allergy	5.0	O~3	215	E
Shrek Smash N' Crash Racing	N/A	Activision	213	E10+
The Sims 2 Pets	6 5	Electronic Arts	211	E
TMNT	N/A	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Tomb Raider Legend	7.5	Eidos	211	T
NINTENDO DS				
Arthur and the Invisibles	N/A	Atari	213	E
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
Bionicle Heroes	N/A	Eidos	211	T
• Bomberman Land Touch!	7.0	Atlus	211	E
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
Brain Boost: Beta Wave	N/A	Majesco	212	E
Brain Boost: Gamma Wave	N/A	Majesco	212	E
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T
Cake Mania	5.5	Majesco	216	E

REVIEWER NOTES

ZACK & WIKI: THE QUEST FOR BARBAROS' TREASURE

If Zack & Wiki being one the most creativing and engaging titles on Wii isn't reason enough for you to make the purchase, then perhaps the threat of my incessant whining will be. Consider yourself warned. Should this brilliantly executed adventure fail to make a dent in the sales chart, you're going to hear about if for months to come! —**Steve T.**

>BOOGIE (Wii)

In the era of lavish and increasingly complex rhythm games, Boogie seemed like it could've been a nice change of pace. Not true—Boogie taught me that the opposite of lavish and complex is boring and dull. Who knew?
—**Chris Sh.**

CONTRA 4

While I agree with Steve T.'s glowing assessment of Contra 4, I probably would have scored it even higher. The game is one of the year's best action titles on any system, and possibly the best Contra game since Contra III on SNES. The tough pattern-based shooting action is old-school to the core—you'll have to practice levels over and over again (unless you opt for easy mode) to succeed—but it's extremely satisfying once you've mastered it. —**Chris H.**

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Cartoon Network Racing	N/A	The Game Factory	213	E
• Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin	9.0	Konami	211	T
Catz	N/A	Ubisoft	211	E
Charlotte's Web	6.0	Sega	211	E
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Cookie & Cream	6.5	Agetec	217	E
• Custom Robo Arena	7.5	Nintendo	215	E10+
Death Jr. And The Science Fair of Doom	5.0	Konami	217	E10+
• Diddy Kong Racing DS	7.5	Nintendo	213	E
• Digimon World DS	N/A	Namco Bandai	212	E
Diner Dash: Sizzle & Serve	6.5	Eidos	217	E
Disney's American Dragon. Jake Long—Attack of the Dark Dragon	N/A	Ubisoft	211	E
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru densetsu	4.0	Atari	217	E
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Eragon	N/A	Vivendi	211	T
Etrian Odyssey	7.0	Atlus	217	T
F-24 Stealth Fighter	3.5	Majesco	215	E10+
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy III	8.0	Square Enix	211	E10+
• Final Fantasy Fables. Chocobo Tales	7.0	Square Enix	216	E
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Fossil League D.T.C.	N/A	D3PA	214	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy	7.0	Destineer	212	T
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
Harlem Globetrotters World Tour	N/A	DSI	211	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	8.0	Nintendo	213	T
Inuyasha: Secret of The Divine Jewel	6.0	Namco Bandai	213	E10+
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	6.5	Atlus	213	E10+
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	N/A	Buena Vista	214	E10+
Kirby. Squeak Squad	7.5	Nintendo	212	E
Konami Classics Series: Arcade Hits	7.5	Konami	214	E10+
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Looney Tunes· Duck Amok	8.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 2	5.0	Konami	215	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Lunar Knights	8.0	Konami	213	E10+
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
• Marvel Trading Card Game	4.0	Konami	213	T
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Meteos: Disney Magic	7.5	Buena Vista	214	E
Micro Machines V4	N/A	Codemasters	211	E
Monster Bomber	N/A	Majesco	212	E
My Frogger: Toy Trials	N/A	Konami	211	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
Naruto: Ninja Council 3	6.0	Tomy	217	E10+
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
Need For Speed: Carbon	N/A	Electronic Arts	211	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All	9.0	Capcom	212	T

THE SIMS 2 CASTAWAY

From customizing your Sims to finding a way back to civilization, The Sims 2 Castaway covers a lot of ground in spite of taking place on deserted isles. Stylus controls for the DS version mimic real survival skills, such as making fire, but controlling your castaways with the Wii version is more fun. It's about time the Sims had a real adventure! —Scott P.

BLEACH SHATTERED BLADE

The remote-swinging combat of Shattered Blade is surprisngly fun. A flexible set of moves and counter-moves make it deeper than other anime-based fighters. —Chris H.

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

After the groundbreaking Metroid Prime and the mixed bag that was Prime 2, Retro finished the series strong with Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, our pick as the best in the trilogy. It isn't just the Wii controls that we love, although they are done so well that we could never again be fully satisfied with a first-person game that goes back to using dual analog sticks. What makes Prime 3 truly great is the expert level design and pacing, nuances that the developers have perfected over many years. What a great game! —Chris Sl.

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
Pirates of the Caribbean:At World's End	7.0	Disney Interactive	217	E10+
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Pogo Island	7.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
• Pokémon Diamond/Pearl	9.0	Nintendo	216	E
Pokémon Ranger	7.0	Nintendo	210	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour:Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
Puzzle Quest:Challenge of the Warlords	4.0	D3PA	215	E10+
Quickspot	5.5	Namco Bandai	214	E10+
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rafa Nadal Tennis	N/A	Codemasters	213	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E
• Rune Factory A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
The Settlers	5.0	Ubisoft	217	E
Shrek The Third	7.0	Activision	217	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Sims 2 Pets	5.5	Electronic Arts	211	E
SNK Vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	7.0	SNK Playmore	215	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
• Spectrobes	8.0	Buena Vista	214	E
Spider-Man 3	7.0	Activision	217	E10+
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	6.0	Activision	212	E10+
Star Wars Lethal Alliance	7.0	Ubisoft	212	E10+
Steel Horizon	4.5	Konami	214	E10+
Tamagotchi Connection: Cornershop 2	N/A	Namco Bandai	211	E
Theme Park	6.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Time Ace	6.5	Konami	216	E10+
TMNT	5.5	Ubisoft	214	E10+
• Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	7.5	Activision	211	E
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	N/A	Atari	213	E10+
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Touch The Dead	5.5	Eidos	217	M
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers· Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Trioncube	5.5	Namco Bandai	213	E
Wario Master of Disguise	6.5	Nintendo	214	E10+
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
• Winning Eleven Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	6.5	Konami	213	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
Xiaolin Showdown	5.0	Konami	212	E
Yoshi's Island DS	8.0	Nintendo	211	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Spirit Caller	N/A	Konami	213	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2007	N/A	Konami	215	E

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Arthur and the Invisibles	N/A	Atari	213	E
Back to Stone	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	214	E
Bionicle Heroes	N/A	Eidos	211	E
Eragon	N/A	Vivendi	211	E10+
Final Fantasy VI Advance	9.5	Nintendo	213	E10+
Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	N/A	Crave Entertainment	213	E
Ghost Rider	N/A	2K Games	213	T
Harlem Globetrotters World Tour	N/A	DSI	211	E
Mazes of Fate	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	213	T
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E
Need For Speed: Carbon	N/A	Electronic Arts	211	E
Polarium Advance	N/A	Atlus	212	E
Shrek Smash N' Crash Racing	N/A	Activision	213	E10+
The Sims 2 Pets	N/A	Electronic Arts	211	E
Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis	6.0	Sega	211	E
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2	7.0	Atlus	211	T
TMNT	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	7.5	Activision	211	E
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	N/A	Atari	213	E10+
Yggdra Union	7.5	Atlus	211	T

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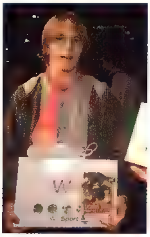
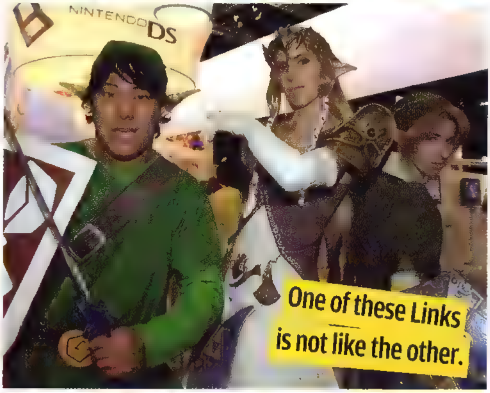
EVENTS

Wild on E for All

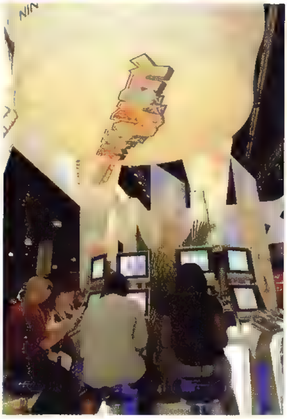


Smash Bros. Brawl tournaments and Zapper shootouts dominate the new game expo created just for the fans.

The inaugural E for All gaming exposition came and went in October, and while the show wasn't as big of a draw as many had hoped, Nintendo had plenty to crow about. Held in the Los Angeles Convention Center (former home to the industry-only E3 Expo), Nintendo occupied one of the largest booths on the show floor. Attendees could try out the new Zapper on Ghost Squad, Medal of Honor Heroes 2, and Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, as well as feel the rhythm of DK Barrel Blast. One of the biggest attractions of the show was the chance to be among the first to go hands-on with Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Super Mario Galaxy—the lines to get in just a few minutes of playing time only grew longer as the day went on. Some lucky people also got to play in a Brawl tournament, which fetched t-shirts for the participants and scored a couple of Wiis for the winners. —**Chris Sh.**



One of these Links is not like the other.



We're not going to name any names, but it looks like *someone's* never worn a tie before.

MATURE 17+
M
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ESRB
HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing video games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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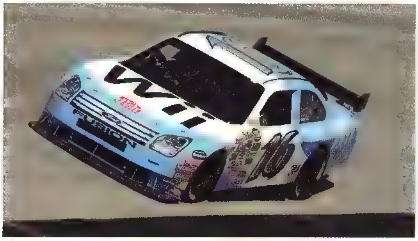
WINNER

Victory Lane

In Volume 221, we proclaimed ourselves Greg Biffle fans when he tore up Watkins Glen in the #16 Wii Ford Fusion (powder blue has never looked so tough). But what he did both on and off the track at Dover on September 23 made us devotees for life. Before the race, Greg took some time away to play Wii Sports with a Nintendo.com sweepstakes winner named Julie, a mother of five who happens to be just about the biggest Nintendo fan *and* Biffle fan on the planet. She ditched her husband to take her friend to the race—we're sure he just loved seeing the pictures she took while she was touring the pits. If that wasn't enough, then Greg hopped in his ride and nailed a second place finish (coming in just behind his teammate Carl Edwards), giving Biffle one of his four top-five finishes on the season. Congrats on a great season, Greg, and thanks for bringing the car back washed and with the tank topped off. —**Chris Sh.**



ANNOUNCEMENT

Making Wii-story

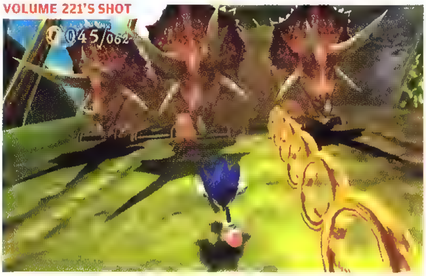
How many people that purchased a Wii have at some point gotten their mom to give Wii Sports Tennis a go, only to get trounced by a "couple of lucky shots?" Then one game leads to another and the whole family is up bowling 'til 2 in the morning. If this sounds familiar, Nintendo wants to hear about it. The Big N has set up a new website called mywiistory.com, where folks can post testimonials and pictures of their newfound love for the Wii. Sure, it's fun to see what other people are saying about the Wii, but it also seems like a great way to convince your family to get you a Wii if you don't have one: find a good story, copy, print, stick under mom's pillow, and voila! —**Chris Sh.**

SCREEN TEST

Hair Scare

As this month's Test Screen shows, there's never a dull moment in a Guilty Gear game. Take a peek, make with the funny, and email your caption to us at screentest@futureus.com. Multiple entries are welcome!

VOLUME 221'S SHOT



"I'm sorry—I thought that was a *Chao* egg!" —Matthew C.

"Hey Tails? Call my insurance company—I've been rear ended." —Larry Fabulous

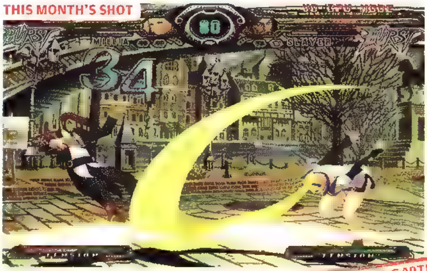
"Don't worry; they're on treadmills." —Willy B.

"If I knew this is what it was gonna take to get into the new Smash Bros..." —edog11911

"Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games just added a new twist to the 50-meter dash..." —Soren

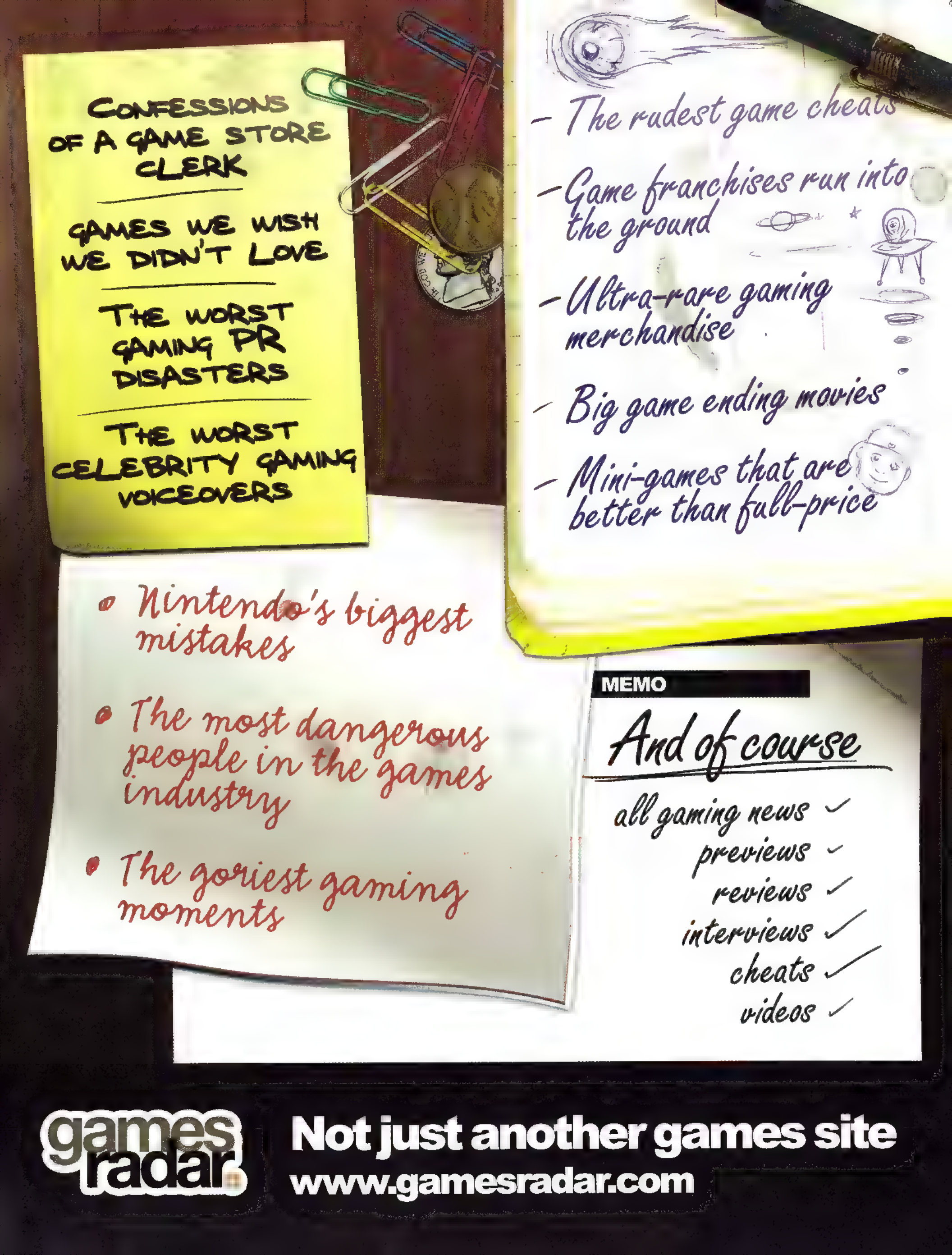
"Sonic suddenly wondered why he signed the contract to star in Jurassic Park IV..." —The_Lost_Fanatic

THIS MONTH'S SHOT



"That hair gel was *too* strong—I can't even stand up!"

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. Think you can do better?



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NEXT MONTH

This past year was an amazing one for gamers, but the good times show no sign of slowing down as we head into 2008.

COURT IS IN SESSION

Capcom's venerable Ace Attorney series continues with a new hero in the first installment built from the ground up for the DS. Expect a full briefing on Ace Attorney: Apollo Justice.

NEW YEAR'S BASH

The revelations from Super Smash Bros. Brawl continue to come fast and furious, and it's our sworn duty to keep you up to speed on the most hotly anticipated game in the known universe.

FEEL THE HEAT

After a 12-year hiatus, the father of Final Fantasy, Hironobu Sakaguchi, returns to a Nintendo platform. We'll take a first look at his new DS tactical RPG, ASH: Archaic Sealed Heat.

BLADE MASTER

Another RPG legend will make its presence felt as we go in-depth with Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors. Please look forward to it.

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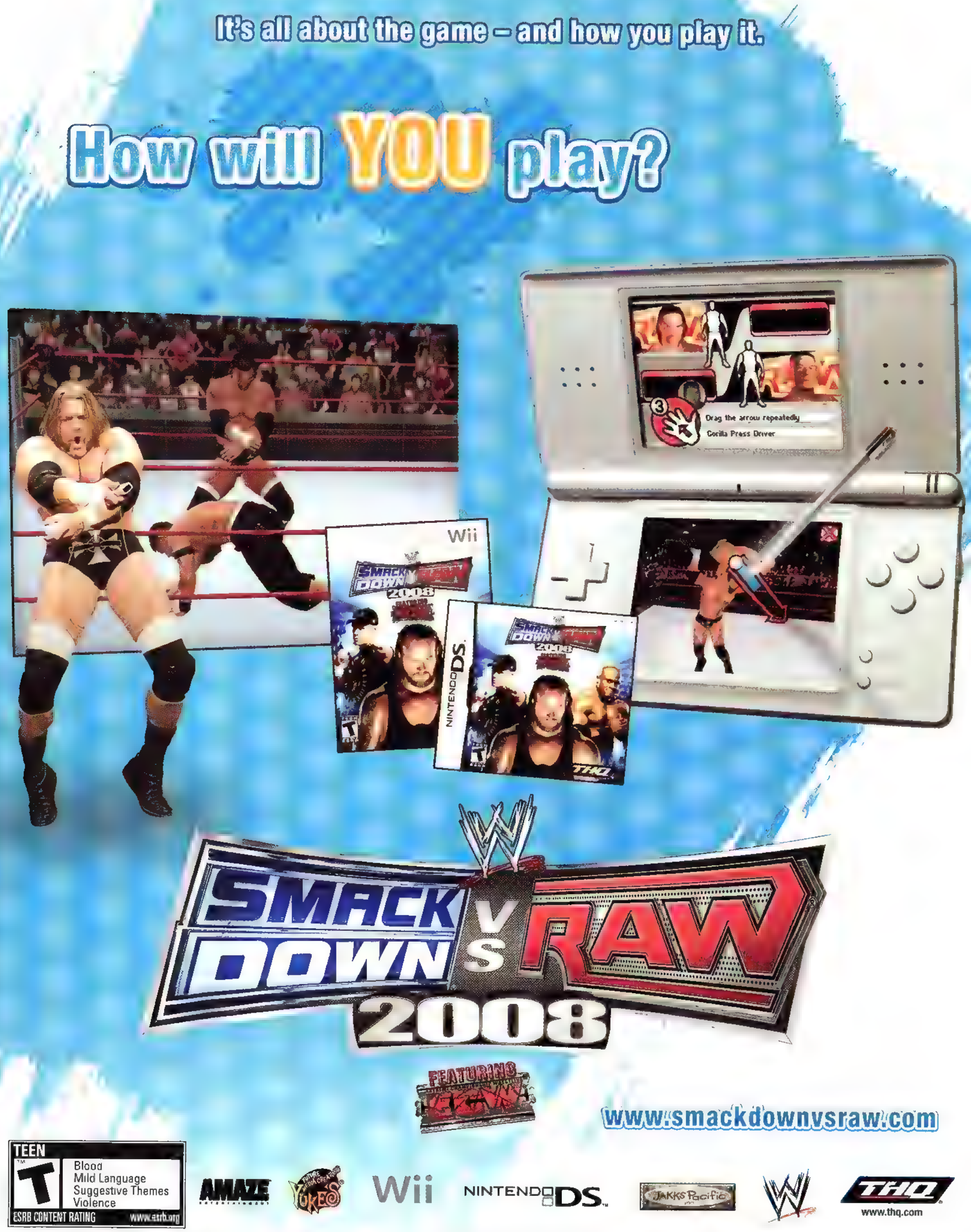
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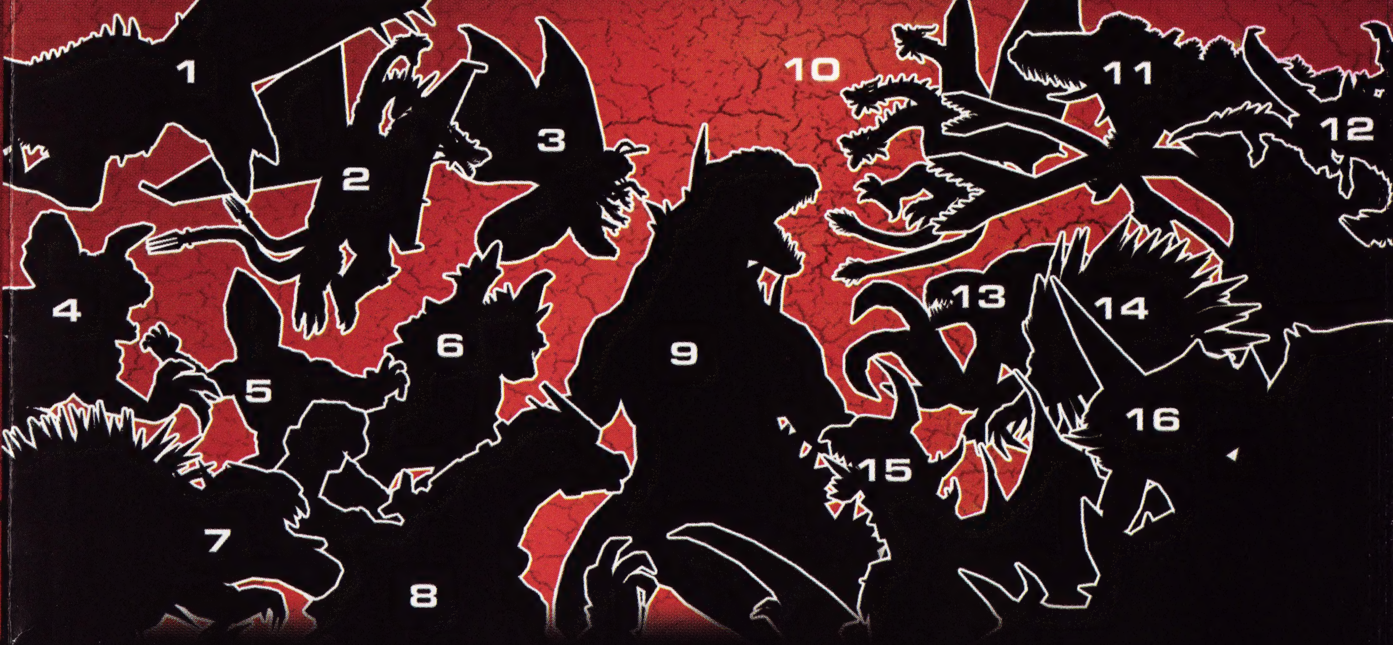
PREVAIL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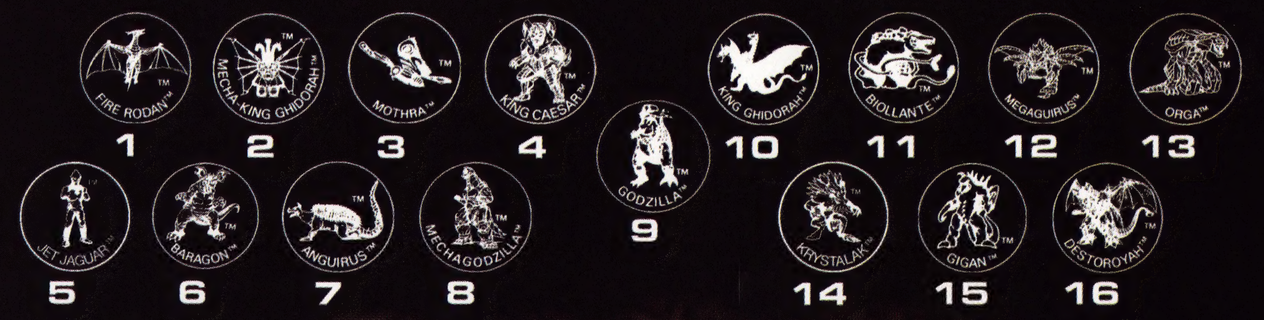
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